

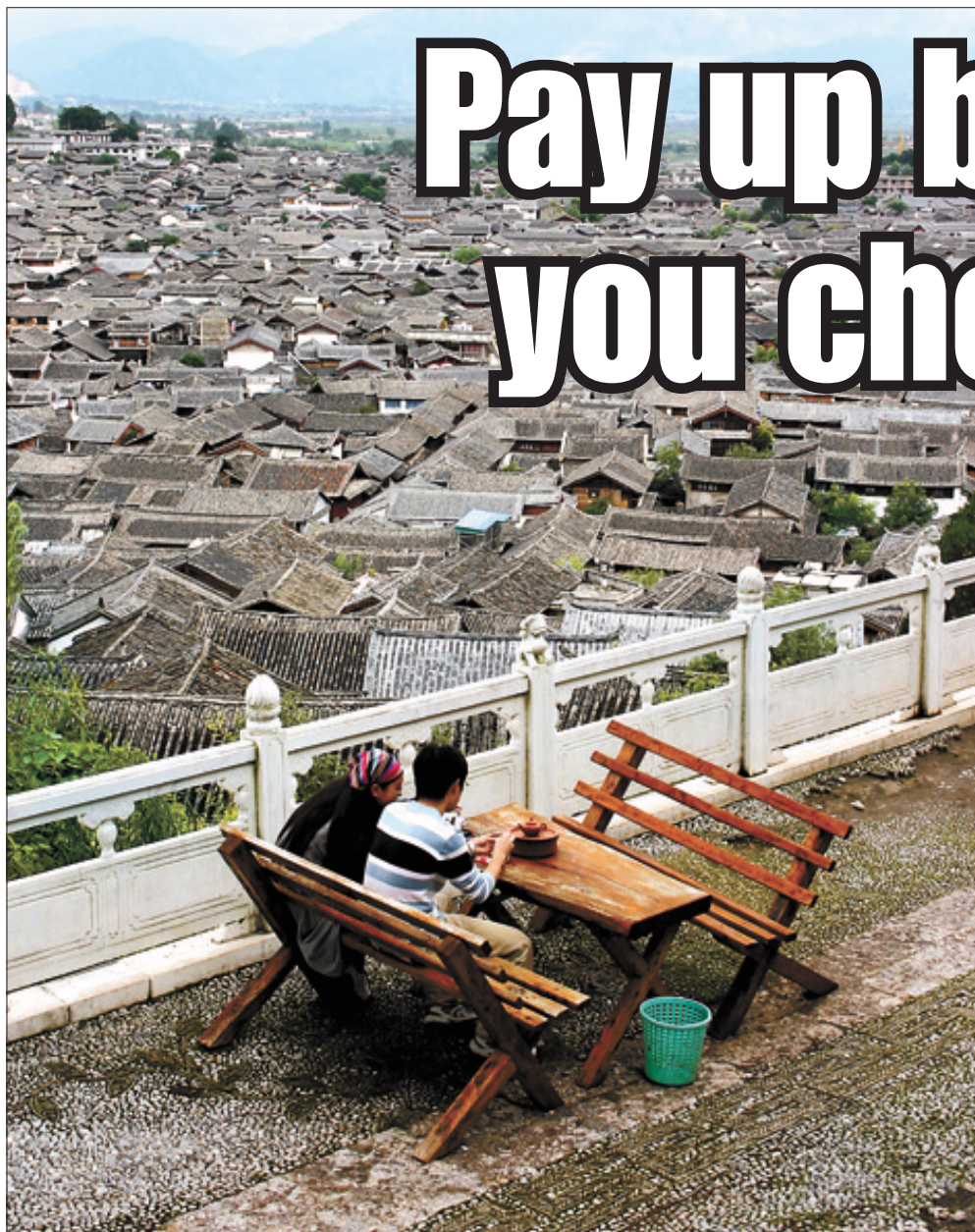
## Grandma an art prodigy

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## Hutong hotels' new look

Page 16



# Pay up before you check in

Starting this month, tourists to Lijiang, Yunnan Province, must pay an 80-yuan maintenance fee to enter the town. The new directive, called the "encircling the city policy," aims to prevent tourists from evading the charge.

Authorities said they will close several roads into the town and deploy an inspection team to verify that tourists paid the fee at its six main entrances.

Will the move be sufficient to protect the UNESCO heritage town from the pressures of increasing commercialization?

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CFP Photo

Hotline goes free for suicidal seniors

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German class spreads to more schools

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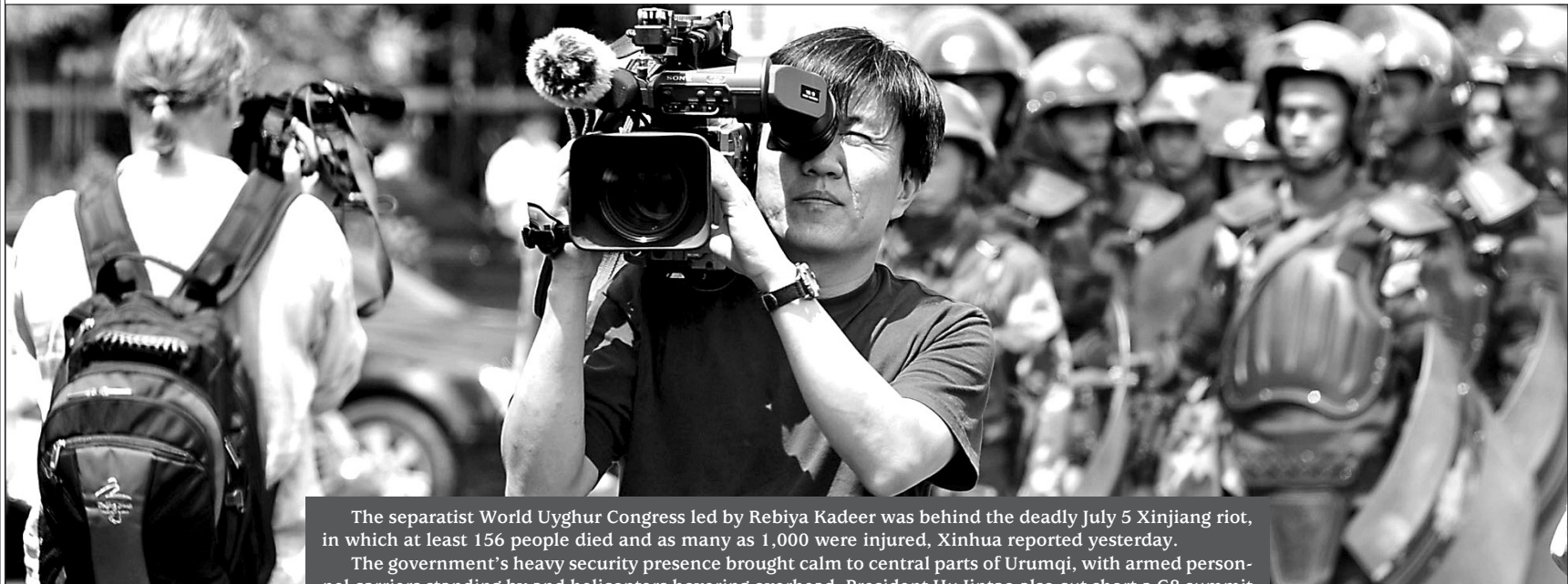
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# Evidence shows Rebiya Kadeer behind Xinjiang riot



The separatist World Uyghur Congress led by Rebiya Kadeer was behind the deadly July 5 Xinjiang riot, in which at least 156 people died and as many as 1,000 were injured, Xinhua reported yesterday.

The government's heavy security presence brought calm to central parts of Urumqi, with armed personnel carriers standing by and helicopters hovering overhead. President Hu Jintao also cut short a G8 summit trip to rush home in the wake of the bloody riots.

However, tension hung in the air despite the calm on the streets Wednesday.

Overseas media said the government adopted a more open attitude this time.

CFP Photo

## News update

### Riots pass, tensions remain

Urumqi appeared calm under heavy paramilitary police presence Wednesday after an overnight traffic curfew, but sporadic clashes were still reported.

Although the "comprehensive traffic curfew" ended, traffic restrictions were imposed on major streets, with members of the Armed Police on patrol and armored personnel carriers standing by.

Urumqi Mayor Jerla Isamudin said 90 percent of the city's bus services had resumed as of noon Wednesday after a fifth were torched or damaged Sunday night.

Urumqi Airport was crowded with people anxious to leave the city.

Li Qian, who flew to Xinjiang for vacation, canceled her plans and said she just wanted to get back home. Those who were not able to book a ticket have gone to nearby hotels. "We fear Xinjiang is not safe anymore," said a passenger, who declined to be named.

Nearly all the hotels next to the airport were full, while only half of the rooms were occupied before the riot.

The Urumqi government brought in produce on 25 railway cars from neighboring cities and counties on Tuesday to supply the city of 3.5 million, the mayor said.

The food was sent to supermarkets and major bazaars. More restaurants resumed business Wednesday. Shops in hospitals also increased supplies to meet the needs of patients.

However, shortages remained.

At a roadside market patrolled by 50 members of the Armed Police, at least one-third of the stalls were empty. Prices of the vegetables were generally two to three times higher than they were before the riot.

## Fact behind

### Separatists plotted the riot

Evidence showed the riot was organized. It was instigated and masterminded by the World Uyghur Congress led by Kadeer, a government source said.

The Congress used the June 26 factory brawl between Uyghur and Han ethnic workers in Guangdong Province, in which two Uyghurs died, to create chaos.

On July 1, the Congress held a special meeting, plotting to instigate unrest by sending messages via the Internet, telephones and mobile phones.

On July 4, agents inside the

country began to send out a flood of online posts encouraging people to go to the Renmin Square in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, to protest on July 5 in support of separatists abroad.

At 1:06 am July 5, police in Urumqi were tipped off that some people were putting out information calling for an illegal gathering at Renmin Square at 7 pm July 5.

According to tapped calls, at 11 am July 5, Kadeer called her younger brother in Urumqi and said, "A lot of things have hap-

pened, and we all know something might happen in Urumqi tomorrow night."

On July 6, Kadeer held an emergency meeting with senior members of the Congress to plan ways to further stir up demonstrations in China and overseas and to call for intervention from foreign governments and human rights institutions.

Their schemes culminated in an attack on China's consulate in Munich, Germany, on Monday morning and violent acts by 150 separatists in front of the embassy

in the Netherlands that afternoon.

All signs pointed to Kadeer, the government said.

Kadeer once claimed the Congress would plot to sabotage activities marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of China this year.

"Kadeer's credentials caught the eye of overseas East Turkestan forces, and her experience has helped them to capitalize on Western anti-Chinese forces," said Ma Dazheng, director of the Xinjiang development research center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

## Government reaction

### No leniency for thugs

Meng Jianzhu, minister of public security, urged Wednesday that there be no leniency in punishing those who had a major role in Sunday's riots.

Those leading the riots should be punished "with the utmost severity," and those who

participated — who were provoked and cheated by separatists — should be given "persuasion and education," Meng said.

The rioting in Urumqi forced President Hu Jintao to cut short his European trip and return to Beijing Wednesday, skipping a

G8 meeting with the leaders of other developing countries that was expected to address the economic crisis and climate change among other global issues.

A statement on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Web site said Hu returned to China "in light of the

current situation in Xinjiang."

In Urumqi, Meng said that evidence proved the riot was masterminded and remotely controlled by overseas separatists and that China faced "a serious struggle to maintain national unity."

## World attention

### Overseas media say China more open

As many as 100 overseas media organizations came to Urumqi to report on the riot.

"We will do our best to provide convenience for reporters while ensuring their safety," said Hou Hanmin, spokeswoman for the Xinjiang regional government.

"We hope media groups report the incident objectively

through close observation of the truth," she said.

"The government has adopted a much more open attitude toward the media in this incident, compared with that seen in the March 14 unrest in Tibet and the Sichuan earthquake last year," said Ted Plasker, a journalist with *The*

*Economist* who has been in China since 1989.

"I have been to the scene and the hospitals. It's horrible to see the people drenched in blood and the shattered shops. Many people who were attacked told me they did not understand why it happened," Plasker said.

"Some places in the city were

surrounded by police and traffic control was visible," he said. "But I understand it's for our safety."

Choi Yoo Sik, a journalist from South Korean daily *Choson Ilbo*, said the government was very open about the incident. "We foreign journalists can interview anybody, Han or Uyghur. I have enough information for my story."

### Rebiya Kadeer profile

Kadeer's personal experiences speak volumes about her separatist connections. She was elected chairwoman of the World Uyghur Congress in 2006, two years after the group was formed in Munich.

The Congress, which claims to represent the "ultimate" interests of the

East Turkestan people, is wholly dedicated to masterminding and funding secessionist activities under the guise of human rights and democracy, the Chinese government said.

Born in Xinjiang in 1951, Kadeer, a former businesswoman, made a fortune in the 1980s through tax eva-

sion and fraud.

She was sentenced to eight years in prison in 2000 for leaking state secrets, and was released on bail in 2005 to seek medical treatment in the US.

Once there, she became involved in extremist groups dedicated to secession and terrorism.



AFP Photo

(By Han Manman, with reporting from Xinhua)



# Hotline opens to aid suicidal elders



CFP Photo

## Began with a friend

Xu Kun, 54, a former professor of philosophy at Capital University of Economics and Business and now deputy editor-in-chief of *Contemporary Manager*, opened her first hotline at the local number 8362 0393 three years ago.

Personal experience moved Xu to get involved in suicide prevention.

Three years ago, at her company's New Year's party, the behavior of a retired editor caught her attention. While everyone else was chatting and cheerful, 81-year-old Zheng Ming (pseudonym) stared blankly and kept silent. When Xu tried to talk to him, he suddenly asked, "Do you think I should die?"

Zheng's wife died the previous year, and he had been depressed ever since. Zheng told Xu he had bought 200 sleeping pills and a bottle of wine, and was ready to check out any time.

Xu worried about Zheng and called him the next day. To cheer him up, Xu tried to talk with him about his past achievements and happier times. When they stopped, Xu promised to call back the next day.

Xu called 20 days in a row until Zheng relented in his plans.

After helping Zheng through his psychological crisis, Xu felt that she could do something to help more elderly people, and so founded her "Love Delivery Hotline."

Xu turned her apartment into an office and filled it with a volunteer staff. Every day, she and her volunteers listened to old people's problems and tried to comfort whoever was on the other end of the line.

They received calls not only from Beijing, but also from Tianjin, Shanghai, Hebei Province and other places. Though the only cost was the long distance connection fee, many old people who called the hotline says it was a heavy cost to bear.

Eventually, Xu realized even the basic phone fee was prohibitive for many people in need of help.

## Phone line, life line

The country is seated with an aging population, and as the ratio of old to young people becomes more uneven, there are sure to be more problems.

"The elderly face four major problems: disease, loneliness, delinquent children and lawsuits," Li Baoku, president of the China Aging Development Foundation, says.

During the past three years, Xu says she has helped nearly 100 elderly people who were considering suicide. She says lone-

By Zhang Dongya

The first free senior suicide hotline went lived at 800-810-0277 on June 27.

The Beijing Suicide Research and Prevention Center reports as many as 100,000 people 55 or older commit suicide every year, accounting for 36 percent of the country's total suicides.

The suicide rate among elderly people in rural areas is four to five times the world average, and their psychological troubles have become thorny problem for the country.

Though many doubt a hotline is the answer to China's psychological woes, initiator Xu Kun insists it is a life saver for some old people, and serves to draw attention to an otherwise neglected group.



The hotline founded by Xu Kun (right) has helped to deter nearly 100 elderly people from suicide during the past three years.

Photo provided by Xu Kun

Volunteers give ear to old people's problems every day.

Photo by BlueP

liness was a major motivator in these cases.

"They become pessimistic and depressed after being left alone," she says.

Some people chortled at the thought of a hotline actually preventing a suicide, but "Elderly people in trouble have few people they can talk to, and that worsens the situation," Xu says.

"They called us to pour out their trouble and pains, and we offer to listen and help," Xu says. "When they call, they are sending us an SOS. We try to alleviate their sense of loneliness and

bad feelings, or at least prevent it from getting worse."

Fang Xin (pseudonym), 64, divorced in 2000 when his ex-wife immigrated to New Zealand. His daughter and son went to join their mother abroad.

After he retired from his state-owned company, Fang's life lost all focus. Like many elderly people, he had high blood pressure. But what troubled him most was the depression and loneliness. He had nightmares and questioned why he was still living.

As the nights rolled on, Fang came to depend on sleeping pills.

He began to amass a war chest of the pills, preparing for the day he would end his life.

Things changed when he called Xu's hotline.

He talked about his problems with a woman volunteer who was about his age, and who had also left her husband after years of his infidelity. The two talked on the phone every day and had much in common.

Another volunteer, Yu Xiaohu, 59, now lives a full and happy life. She divorced and left to work in Beijing, far from her family. After she retired in 2006, she moved into an underground

apartment to avoid the city's infamously high rent. With nothing to do, her thoughts turned inward as loneliness set in.

"I dialed the hotline a month after they established it and joined up. Later on, I started to take part in volunteer activities and got to know many friends my age. It changed my life," Yu says.

Now, she has found work as a housekeeper and rented a real apartment. In her spare time, she goes to the gym, blogs and plays drums, an instrument she started learning 10 years ago.

## Getting sponsored

This year, Xu Kun's hotline gained an endorsement from Johnson & Johnson Medical (China). It helped support the transition to a toll free hotline and the recruitment of paid employees in addition to volunteers.

"Most enterprises cared about the situation of children in China, but few bother with the elderly, who also need help," Fu Xiaoming, vice-president of Johnson & Johnson, says.

With the support of the company, the hotline has expanded to four lines. They plan to extend it to eight next year. This year, the hotline will expand to Shanghai and Chengdu, Sichuan Province, and seven other cities like Wuhan in Hubei Province, Guangzhou in Guangdong Province next year.

They also considered establishing a Web site to offer consultation services online. Fu says they plan to train 100 psychological consultants in the initial stage and send them to mental hospitals throughout the country. More will be trained if the response is good.

"More than 500 employees in our company have become hotline volunteers, and more employees can help if needed. We have a rich resource of doctors and hospitals ready to help elderly people," Fu says.

Xu hired 10 people for the hotline aid center, most of who are from the Social Work Department in the China Youth University for Political Sciences. They receive phone calls from senior people and try to solve their trouble however possible.

Since the toll free lines opened, they have received 60 calls a day.

Volunteers are told never to say "no" to callers. "Even if we cannot offer specific help, we should at least give some good suggestions," Xu says. People considering suicide are supposed to be kept on the line for at least 15 minutes.

Fifteen minutes may be enough to turn around their whole life.



# Young grads haunt the morgue for jobs

By Jin Zhu

Funeral industry positions, which job hunters used to shun, have become attractive new choices in the job crunch. Funeral homes offer competitive salaries, benefits and opportunities to advance. But the job isn't for everyone – only people who totally commit to the industry can understand all that it offers.



Thousands of graduates swarming the once underattended funeral industry job fair.

## Angel for the dead

Zhang Qi, 24, is a young mortician at Babaoshan Cemetery, one of the city's best known funeral homes. Although he has only worked there for three years, the office has already come to depend on his talents.

Zhang's day begins at 7 am and ends at 4 pm. On average, he processes one corpse per hour in his 60-square-meter workroom.

The room is vacant except a cabinet, chair, sink and space to change clothes – and a big coffin in the middle.

He looks over the body and some photos, and then opens the cabinet to take out his makeup, wax, brushes and a few color keys to get to work.

Zhang has dealt with hundreds of bodies to become an experienced mortician. But his career change three years ago met fierce resistance from his family.

"My parents were worried about my coming in contact with dead bodies every day. They thought I would get a disease. For my grandmother, who was really traditional, working in a funeral home was an extreme taboo," he says.

Before going to the morgue, he worked as a computer salesman in Zhongguancun, a job he says was unbearably boring.

"Although it was my first job when I graduated from college, I had no passion for it. One day I ran across an ad that Babaoshan Cemetery was recruiting, so I decided to give it a try," he says.

Zhang says seeing dead people and their grief-stricken families helped him to gradually realize the special importance of his work.

"Applying makeup to corpses is a special skill. It isn't like applying makeup to someone who is living – there are many special problems. Some people were banged around in traffic accidents, and their wounds must be sewn up and patched with wax before they can be hidden with makeup," Zhang says.

Even if two bodies share some features, each may require an entirely different style of makeup to make the family happy, he says.

"I try to learn about who the person was in life. For example, if he was a soldier, it might be better to include some red tones to create a stronger image," he says.

Last August, Zhang's grandmother died and Zhang volunteered to prepare her for being laid out.

"I was hesitant and wondered whether I could stay professional



In his three years on the job, Zhang Qi (left) has dealt with hundred of bodies and become an experienced mortician.

Photo by Huang Qiaoquan



Morticians face social hurdles that easy job seekers may not understand.

CFP Photos

when faced with my own family. However, I believed it was the best way to be a filial grandson," he says.

Zhang says he had a deeper understanding of a mortician's role the moment he touched her face.

"The mortician is responsible for the final appearance of the deceased. He tries to rescue their original face from death to give the survivors at least some comfort when they see him for the last time," he says.

"The best reward for us is to hear that the deceased looks like he or she is sleeping," he says.

In Chinese, an "angel in white" is a doctor who saves lives. Zhang sees a piece of this in his own work, where he "saves"

people's deaths to give them a final dignity.

## Behind the industry

Zhang Qi is just one of many graduated students who have found a place in the industry.

The economic downturn has created extra pressure for graduates who are seeking jobs, and even these traditionally unpopular positions have attracted a staggeringly long queue of job-seekers.

Beijing Funeral and Interment Administration says it recruited 10 undergraduate students and four postgraduates in 2008. All graduated from prestigious universities, including Peking University, Beijing Normal University, and China

University of Political Science and Law.

He Jia, who studied information engineering in graduate school, says he found his first job at a software company. However, the company chose not to renew his contract because of a poor business year. Stuck between jobs, he looked to the funeral industry.

"Since the industry is not affected by economic shifts, I consider it a stable job. The average salary is from 3,000 to 5,000 yuan, and it offers competitive benefits," he says.

On the other hand, in a country still steeped in superstitions about death, working for a funeral home really has its drawbacks, he says.

"It is a little stressful, and I can't just casually throw out my occupation (during a conversation)," he says.

In April, at a funeral industry job fair in Shanghai, more than 5,000 graduates came to find work. The 15 funeral parlors and cemeteries received 3,200 resumes for their 418 positions.

However, nearly one-third of the applicants dropped out when they were informed there would be a training period for the job.

"Some students are really impetuous and just apply for everything they see without thinking," Huang Qiaoquan, director in Beijing Funeral and Interment Administration, says.

"In China, people are hardly educated about death or how to deal with it. Most graduates do not understand this industry at all. Working here means providing a public service. It carries a heavy social responsibility, and students need to be prepared, fully, before entering this industry," he says.

## New opportunity

Funeral homes need people to operate the crematorium, morticians, pallbearers and customer service representatives. At Babaoshan Cemetery, most of these positions – aside from customer service – are filled by men who are 45 years old or older. There are very few workers in the 30 to 45 age range.

"Since three years ago, Beijing's two main funeral homes, Dongjiao and Babaoshan, have had a worker shortage with no young workers coming in," Huang says.

Since the funeral industry is trying to emphasize its social function, many modern services such as funeral arrangement and grief counseling will be introduced to the industry.

"Educated professionals from a range of backgrounds are needed to fill these new service areas. The industry will increase its graduate recruitment – and hopefully these new recruits will bring original ideas to the industry," he says.



# The business of caring

Fresh graduates establish model of charity, community service and business

Li Xin, a new graduate of the Beijing Youth College of Political Science, opened Dongcheng Community Services Agency with nine classmates last week. It was a move that would bridge charity and enterprise, Li said.

The agency manages projects for the Dongcheng district government, charity organizations, institutions with charity projects, residential communities and individuals. Its services include care for pre-school children and the elderly and psychological help for young adults.

Li emphasized that the organization is not a corporation since it aims to provide free social services. He does not want its clientele to get the impression that the group is after profit.

"We meet the demand for charitable work, community service and jobs," he said, pride evident in his voice. The agency has received praise from Beijing's district governments, Li's college and the residential communities it serves.

## Free community service

"Our volunteers consist mostly of high school teachers, university professors and renowned philanthropists. Our clients will benefit from their rich experience and expertise in education and social work."

— Li Xin, founder, Dongcheng Community Services Agency

Li and his classmates designed a program called Happy Summer Vacation so that students whose fathers and mothers are tied to their work will have a more enjoyable summer holiday. Participants take lessons, undergo psychological evaluation and do their summer school-work together.

"Working-class families make up more than 90 percent of society," Li said. "Since both parents work throughout the day, care of their children has become a social problem." Li's team turned the problem into an opportunity.

During the Dragon Boat Festival in May, they organized a *zhongzi* or glutinous rice activity in Ju'er Hutong, an event that encouraged local and expat residents to socialize.

The agency will soon help the Jiadaokou community draft a disciplinary guideline for residents and improve designs for local construction work. Also in the pipeline is a survey to understand the most pressing needs of Dongcheng's residents, particularly the children and elderly.

## Social services in demand

"Residential community volunteers are active and in high demand in recent years as people move from traditional courtyard houses to high-rise apartments."

— Yuan Yuan, China Association of Community Volunteers

By Zhao Hongyi

Charity, community service and business are badly needed in China today. But the crucial question is: How do you provide charitable community service as a business operation?

Ten young Beijing graduates hoped to provide an answer by setting up an organization to serve residential communities. Their efforts have been recognized by the communities they serve and the local government, which inspires them to keep on going.



A group of community volunteers invite elders to sell their gifts and crafts at a residential community fair in Beijing.

CFP Photo



Sticking warning tips outside in Nanluoguxiang



Providing free health exams to the elders



Inviting the elders to give advice



Helping community managers to reduce pressure

Photos provided by Li Xin

The Dongcheng district government hopes the agency will help improve the quality of community service as well as encourage university graduates to start a business.

The country is undergoing a huge transformation from being a family-based society to a residential community-based one as people move from landed homes to apartment buildings. People are getting busier at work, which leaves less time and energy to care for children and the elderly.

"The mushrooming residential towers isolate people from one another, prevent them from taking care of each other," Wang Qianlin, a sociology professor from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said. "This has resulted in many social problems like psychological disorders, disappearance of kids as in kidnapping and suicides."

Residential community volunteerism on the mainland was introduced in the 1980s by volunteers from Taiwan, where it has been practiced for three decades.

As of June 30 this year, 18 million Chinese have registered as residential community volunteers, of whom a million are active in their roles, said Yuan Yuan, deputy director and general manager of the China Association of Community Volunteers.

"Volunteers have been particularly active in recent years, such as during last year's snowstorm and earthquake," she said. "During the Olympics and the Paralympics, community volunteers made up half of the 1 million volunteers serving the two games."

## A path for young people to start a business

"We encourage our graduates to start their own business and create jobs for their schoolmates."

— Liang Lili, president, Beijing Youth College of Political Science

Each year, colleges and universities produce millions of graduates. The government and private enterprises cannot provide jobs for all of them, so the government is encouraging people to start their own business.

Besides the recognition Dongcheng Community Services Agency received, it was given financial support worth 10,000 yuan by Li's alma mater.

"We encourage our graduates to start their own business and create jobs for their schoolmates," Liang Lili, the school president, said at the awarding ceremony.

The school also has a "long-term plan to explore the social services market in Beijing's 18 districts and counties," Li Suju, an associate professor at the college told *Beijing Today*. "In this way, we can provide jobs for our graduates and internships for our students throughout the city."

Li Xin has been invited by the government of Dongcheng's neighboring Xicheng District to open a branch there. But he is not yet thinking of expanding; he is presently more than busy making sure things run smoothly.

"I have to find projects and professionals to form our core services," he said. "This is important for a start-up operation."

## The bumpy road of charity work

"China is a huge market with big demand but very conservative prices. It will become more sensitive if you include charity in the equation. But that is the way we need to go if we want to continue on the road of charity work."

— Li Xin

Li was frank about the problems that go with running an organization like his — especially the money part.

"Most of our projects are temporary ones with limited funds. We need long-term projects to sustain ourselves," he told *Beijing Today*. "This is critical to a small organization like ours," he said, adding that he remained optimistic of the agency's future.

Li said he believes that relying on donations limits an organization's efficiency, and he is considering charging a minimal fee in the future for the group's services. "Taking payment from your clients will oblige you to raise the quality and efficiency of your services," he said.

"The key point is how much you should charge," he said. "China is a huge market with big demand but very conservative prices. It will become more sensitive if you include charity in the equation."

Li insists that his agency is a non-profit organization and that quality will be his top priority. "Profit will always be at the bottom of our list," he said. "But that does not mean we do not care about profit," he said with a smile.



# Yuan in settlement trials

## Future as a reserve currency still far off



The yuan settlement trial is considered a big step in turning the yuan into a reserve currency.

IC Photo

While announced months ago, the government this week started its pilot program to allow cross-border trade in certain regions to be settled in yuan currency. The move was a milestone in turning the yuan into an international currency.

But will the yuan become a reserve currency? Will it dethrone the US dollar?

### Yuan settlement scheme

The People's Bank of China, the central bank, officially launched on Monday its yuan settlement program for transnational trade.

Six Shanghai companies signed contracts with counterparts in Hong Kong and Indonesia on Monday, becoming the first companies to settle business deals in Chinese currency. Executives said the move would save costs and avert exchange rate risks.

Bank of China and Bank of Communications were the first to clear transactions in yuan, considered a lucrative business given China's expanding economy and presence in international trade.

Hong Kong also began its long-awaited yuan settlement program on Monday, which will widen the territory's role as an offshore yuan center and a testing ground for gradual liberaliza-

tion of the currency.

HSBC said it completed its first yuan trade settlement with Shanghai and its first cross-border yuan credit transaction.

"Trade settlement in yuan will make it more convenient for both Chinese and foreign firms who conduct China-related exports and imports," said Xu Weimin, chairman of Shanghai Silk Group, a company that sold goods to Hong Kong's China Products Holdings in one of the contracts signed Monday.

Caught off guard and partly lacking the skills to hedge against foreign exchange volatility, many small Chinese exporters closed shop when the yuan was revalued at 2.1 percent against the dollar in July 2005. The yuan appreciated a further 19 percent since.

In announcing the settlement program in April, the govern-

ment said it would initially be limited to certain areas, including Hong Kong and Macau, outside the Chinese Mainland and to Shanghai and Guangdong Province on the mainland.

It would also be tested between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Yunnan and Guangxi regions of south China before expanding elsewhere.

"The program should have limited impact on the yuan's value in the initial stages due to official restrictions and because firms need time to get familiar with the procedures," Liu Dongliang, currency analyst at China Merchants Bank in Shenzhen, said.

"But with its expansion and in the long term, it will increase pressure for the yuan to appreciate as its international status strengthens." (Agencies)

### Stability first

China will face new challenges, Sun Lijian, a finance professor at Fudan University, said.

These include the efficiency of the settlement system and the risk of ebbing liquidity, which may reduce the demand for the yuan.

The scheme would help stabilize the value of proceeds from overseas transactions and could pave the way for liberalization of China's exchange rate and capital accounts. However, the nation should be prepared for challenges, he said.

To be an international currency, the yuan must be able to maintain its value or appreciate. Also, the current demand for yuan may be created by market liquidity since all governments are spending more to boost their economies while people wait on the yuan to strengthen.

"There are risks that profit-seeking investors may abandon the yuan when the global financial crisis calms and governments soak up market liquidity," Sun said.

(Agencies)

### Analyst: a welcome relief

By Huang Daohen

domestic traders who have been hit hard by the sharp depreciation of the US dollar, analysts said.

"Local traders will definitely benefit the most, as they would be able to hedge their currency risks," Zhao Xiao, financial professor at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said.

The US dollar took a heavy beating last year and continues to remain weak amidst the economic downturn. The dollar lost 6.5 percent of its value since the

start of the year, Zhao said.

"Traders took a lot of losses when the yuan appreciated, so they would surely make use of this program," he added.

The move was largely seen as a new step towards further liberalization of the yuan. "It would make things very easy for Chinese companies who have overseas business, effectively eliminating foreign currency risks," he said.

However, Zhao said full adoption of the yuan as a major currency for global trade remains far off.

"The yuan will internationalize significantly over the next 5 to 10 years, and over a longer period, maybe 10 to 20 years, it may become a secondary reserve currency," he said.

In the mean time, Zhao said the US dollar still dominates global currency. "Most people are not yet open to other currencies, and trades have always been settled in US dollars," he said.

As for replacing the dollar as the main global reserve currency, Zhao said it would require many decades and a combination of improbable events.

The government needs to solve its technical problems, including having a more convertible currency and deeper financial markets, he said.

The key question, he said, was whether the country is willing to live with exchange rate volatility, which is considered a paradox.

While logic dictates that a reserve currency must rise and fall with the flows of global capital, China has to tighten its grip on the yuan due to the worry of export job losses caused by its appreciation, he said.

### Iranian oil seeks new Chinese investors

By Jin Zhu

The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company, a major constituent of Iran's Ministry of Petroleum, held a seminar to seek investment opportunities for Iran's refinery projects in Beijing on July 7.

At the seminar, National Iranian Oil introduced its refinery projects, new projects awaiting construction and its pipeline projects. Its investment totaled 370 billion yuan.

"After finishing the construction of the refineries and starting production, daily output will increase from the 1.5 million barrels of crude to 2.2 million," Shahnazi Zadeh, deputy minister of the Ministry of Petroleum and president of the company, said.

Iran has enacted a series of policies to encourage more Chinese enterprises, banks and financial institutions to take an active role in investing in the anticipated projects. Under these policies, Chinese enterprises can become shareholders by establishing a joint venture.

Besides providing stable amounts of crude, Iranian companies would offer a 5 percent discount on the price per barrel.

"At present, international oil prices are depressed, and (we expect) it will have a certain impact on investment. However, since Iran has a large reserve of oil and natural gas and years of experience in refinery, the projects come with a guarantee," Liu Jiaming, president of Sinopec Engineering Incorporation, said at the seminar.

Hamid Reza Katoozian, head of the Energy Commission of Iran said he was hopeful about Sino-Iranian energy cooperation.

"As one of the two most important members of OPEC with the fourth largest refinery capacity, Iran plays a key role in world energy safety. Faced with the expanded demand for energy in East Asia, Iran has made a long-term plan to protect China's energy need," Saeed Badamchi Shabestari, minister counselor, said.

"Since China has become the biggest partner for Iran in Asia, further cooperation in the energy sector will have a dramatic influence on international energy prices in the future," he said.



# The Lijiang Dilemma

Is collecting fees the ultimate solution to protecting the ancient town?



Fewer local residents could be seen in the town nowadays.

## Policy to encircle city

Starting this month, people visiting Lijiang must pay 80 yuan to enter any of the town's six main entrances, the Protection and Management Bureau of Lijiang Ancient Town announced early June.

The directive, known as "encircling the city policy," also hopes to prevent fee-dodgers by closing some roads leading to the town and sending out inspection teams.

Xu Jiase, deputy director of the bureau, said fee evasion has long existed among tourists and has caused financial problems for the government. "Since the cost of maintaining the old town increases year after year, we are almost over our heads. The new policy seeks to ease the financial pressure and avoid fee evasion," Xu was quoted by Xinhua News Agency as saying.

"To outsiders, it looks like there's a lot of money, but we actually can't make ends meet. The expenditure exceeded 1.3 billion yuan last year and we still owe 640 million yuan to the bank," he said.

The bureau said the maintenance fee used to be charged via travel agencies, scenic spots, restaurants and hotels, with an inspection team randomly asking tourists to present their receipt. To make a sale however, some establishments sometimes leave off the maintenance fee.

"Since there are a lot of roads that lead out of the city, it's difficult to check if every tourist has paid the fee. What's more, some tourists do not believe in paying voluntarily to protect the old town," Xu said.

The local government said the new policy was also a way to awaken the public's consciousness about the importance of protecting cultural heritage sites.

But the move has become controversial, with many saying fee collection alone will not protect historical sites, and that conservation involves balancing social, economic and cultural development. Others believe the fee should be abolished.

Lijiang started collecting the maintenance fee in 2001. It was then 40 yuan, and then increased to 80 yuan in 2007. So far, the government's collection has amounted to 750 million yuan. The tourism department however said the town has lost tens of millions of yuan through fee evasion in the past eight years.

“

By Huang Daohen

The ancient town of Lijiang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Yunnan Province, became a magnet for artists who wanted to build studios, merchants who sought fortune and crowds of tourists who wanted to have a good time. The people whose families have lived there for generations moved to bigger cities to find a more comfortable life.

Is Lijiang's future at risk? A recent move by the local government to tighten enforcement of maintenance fee collections renewed concerns that its preservation was hanging in the balance.

”



There has long been an argument over whether Lijiang is too commercialized. Photos by Zhou Chunlin

## Voices

### Official

Most of the Lijiang government officials are local residents. They were born in the ancient town and have a deep love for the place. The negative effects of tourism have caught their attention.

From hereon, people who open shops there must get an operating license from the government, said He Shiyong, director general of the local administration bureau.

Although Lijiang has many problems in the area of tourism and heritage management, it has done an outstanding job in heritage protection, he said.

Classes on Naxi, the dialect of Lijiang's main ethnic group, are being offered in primary schools to preserve and promote local culture.

### Expert

Bai Yubao, an expert at the Yunnan Non-material Cultural Heritage Protection Center, sup-

ports tighter inspections, saying it is common for historical sites to collect fees, like castles in southern Europe. And protecting a site like Lijiang is not a simple task, he said.

"A heritage site is owned and shared by all the human beings, and we should pay for its maintenance," Bai said. "The question isn't whether or not to charge, but how much and in which way."

But he said collecting fees is only half the solution. "The fee's use should be seriously and wisely studied. No matter how it is used, all we hope is to keep the old town's rich culture and make it a splendid world cultural heritage site."

### Comment

#### An efficient method

I support the policy. All world cultural heritage sites are facing a lack of funds. At present, charging a fee is one of the most efficient

methods to solve Lijiang's financial difficulties.

— Chen Jun, senior editor, Xinhua News Agency

#### Like visiting a park

I've been to Lijiang several times and I understand the government's intention to better protect the town by collecting fees. Still, it feels strange to be required to pay. It's like visiting a park.

— Felix, engineer from Ireland

#### A dilemma

Balancing conservation and commercialization is a problem historical sites have always faced. It is a dilemma: establishing world-class sites involves commercialization, but overcommercialization also harms the old culture. One possibility is to help tourists understand the importance of paying a fee to protect heritage sites.

— Jeff Bass, expat teacher from US

## Background

### Lijiang's conservation at a crossroad

It has long been popular opinion that Lijiang is too commercialized, Mei Qing, a heritage protection expert at the Shanghai Tongji University, said.

"Lijiang's conservation is at a crossroad. Positive and negative factors co-exist in the ancient city," Mei said. She said tourism has promoted the economic development of the city, but negative factors have also emerged. "Lots of efforts have been made to protect Lijiang, but inappropriate construction projects have also occurred."

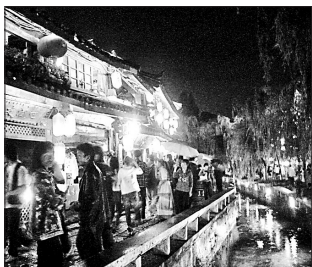
Last year, Mei led a team that studied ways to protect the ancient town. According to their findings, the number of tourists that pour into the small town each year jumped from 200,000 about 10 years ago to the current 4 million. Local migrants make up a third of its population.

Water in the ancient town is contaminated, farmlands around it are disappearing, and ice and snow on the mountains nearby are melting, the report said.

Mei and her team also discovered that many residents rented out their houses to businessmen. Others moved out of town because they could no longer live in their homes, which have been listed as key protected sites by the local government.

"The ancient town should not only be a cultural wonder for visitors, but also a place of enjoyment for its residents," she said. "People are the inheritors of cultural heritage. Without local residents, its traditional culture would vanish."

## Related



Many complain Lijiang has too many commercial establishments.

## World Heritage tag can be revoked

A UNESCO World Heritage Site can be stripped of its title if it is not protected well.

On June 25, the UN body dropped Germany's Dresden Elbe Valley from the list when the local government began building a bridge across the valley. The UN decision was made at a meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Seville, Spain.

Elbe Valley, which became a World Heritage Site in 2004, received the honor for its 18th and 19th century landscape that includes baroque palaces and gardens.

German authorities began constructing a bridge in 2007 despite UNESCO warnings, since supporters of the project found it essential to reduce traffic congestion.

Six of China's World Heritage sites have received a warning from UNESCO following the Seville meeting. One of the international agency's concerns was a controversial proposal to build dams near The Three Parallel Rivers, which cover a vast area in the upper reaches of the Nu (Salween), Lancang (Mekong) and Jinsha (Yangtze) rivers.



# German woman's 30-year love affair with Old Beijing



Kosima Weber Liu prepares for the photo exhibition.

Photo by Venus Lee

By Venus Lee

Kosima Weber Liu marked her 30th anniversary in Beijing last Sunday with a photography exhibition that showed the extraordinary changes she has witnessed in the capital.

Seeds of Time, held at the Aman at Summer Palace hotel, presented black-and-white photos grouped under relics, hutong, streetscape and people. "The exhibition is to remember

the month 30 years ago when I first came to Beijing," the 51-year-old German native said. Particularly striking were her portraits taken between 1979 and 1989, when China experienced massive economic and social changes.

Through her pictures, Liu wants young Chinese people and foreigners to be empowered by a better understanding of the country's history. "We need to pass on the seeds of the spirit

from generation to generation. Each can let the seeds grow in their own time, in their own ways and do the best they can," she said, explaining the origin of the exhibition's title.

Liu came to China in 1979 from then-West Germany on a language exchange program. At the time, few German citizens had an opportunity to come here so she made it her mission to become their eyes. "If I was

asked to tell them about China, I wouldn't have been able to say much. But if I showed them pictures, they would understand much better," said Liu, who is married to a Chinese American environmental journalist and has four children.

From the first time she explored Beijing, Liu said she was captivated by the country's rich history and culture. She has a special affinity for Buddhist and Taoist temples and remnants of the Liao and Jin dynasties, the start of Beijing's story as the national capital. "My desire to uncover the old Beijing atmosphere led me to Liao and Jin relics, of which I took a lot of pictures," she said.

With a historian friend, she explored more than 200 temples and hundreds other old sites. "You just have to know where you want go and then you explore ... Sometimes we'd spend all day but find nothing; sometimes we'd find the place we were looking for but nothing was left," she said. They discovered many interesting places not mentioned in popular guidebooks.

But Liu's most unforgettable memories are of people's reaction to her mission. An ancient site might have been very inter-

esting, but locals were embarrassed to show her around because of its state of disrepair. "We think it's beautiful, but they think it's ugly and we shouldn't see it. They think it's terrible if you take a picture of an ugly China. So they always want to stop us from going to untidy places. They often think foreigners should only be shown the modern and clean side of Beijing. It has been a big obstacle for many years," she said.

This attitude is gradually changing, but new challenges have emerged, particularly in relic preservation. "When you go back to a beautiful ancient site, you can't find relics anymore. Or even the place itself might be gone," Liu said.

She holds Beijing dear and hopes its remaining ancient buildings will be preserved. "I don't want to see only skyscrapers in Beijing. I want to see ancient temples, local neighborhoods and old hutong alongside the new Beijing. I also hope old buildings and historical sites in the outskirts will be protected." With three generations of her family, Liu lives in a Beijing courtyard home to be close to a feature of Beijing that fueled her imagination.

## American blogger captures biggest Chinese audience

By Wang Yu

Mark Powers is not the only foreigner who writes a blog in Chinese. But his getpowers.cn is the most popular – a window into the life of an American man living in Beijing.

"China's (work force) is becoming more and more competitive, but I still think there are opportunities here for foreigners. That made me come back three months ago," said Powers, who first came to the country in 2005 as a Chinese language student.

Powers, a native of Phoenix, Arizona, majored in Eastern culture in college, where he also studied Japanese. After graduation, he went to Japan and landed a job as a translator.

A business trip to Singapore in 2003 led him on a path to China. He met many Chinese people there who fuelled his interest in their language. "I've found that there are many characters in Japanese which are borrowed from Chinese. So to me, it was very exciting to learn a new language which has a big connection to one I've mastered," Powers said.

He studied Chinese on his own for two years, then decided to enroll at the People's University of China in Beijing. At the school, he saw Chinese students' passion for learning English, but realized they had no one with whom to practice the language.

"Many students told me I was the

first foreigner they ever talked to. That's a roadblock to improvement," he said. "You now find many foreigners in big cities like Beijing or Shanghai, but students in other places lack opportunities to communicate with us face to face."

In 2006, Powers created his Chinese blog as an alternative venue for native English speakers to talk to each other. At the same time, getpowers.cn drew the attention of Chinese netizens, and Powers realized he finally found his perfect audience. Many Chinese people were curious about the lives of foreigners here, but the mass media usually discussed high-profile figures rather than average expats.

"I think people like my blog because it contains every detail of my life in Beijing – things I find interesting and problems I encounter. That's how my real life looks. Moreover, I write in Chinese which helps communicate my stories to a bigger number of Chinese netizens," he said.

Powers also maintains an English blog for his family and friends in the States. Like his Chinese fans, people from his hometown are curious about the life of a foreigner in China, which rarely features into US media reports.

After finishing his Chinese studies in 2007, he went back to America and worked for an investment firm. He

decided to quit when the US economy collapsed. "I came back (to China) to look for new opportunities and to take a break," he said.

To pay the bills, Powers temporarily worked as an English teacher. But he knew his talents did not lie there. "I want to use my creative abilities. I have experience in finance and developing Web sites. To me, the key is to discover what makes you different or what separates you from others," he said.

Powers' career might still be hanging in the balance, but his Chinese blog is clearly king. His Chinese readers discuss their English lessons with him or ask him about life in the States. He recently opened an online store that sells US products.

"I talk with these people and they trust me. So why not introduce them to American products that I trust?" he said, adding that the store's site will soon transfer to Taobao.com to make purchases more convenient.

Powers has also made improvements on getpowers.cn, which he hopes will attract a bigger following among foreigners who can write in Chinese. "They can improve their Chinese, while providing interesting content to Chinese readers – a double win, isn't it?" he said. It is his resiliency, creativity and determination that separates him from other foreign bloggers.



Mark Powers

Photo by Song Nannan



# Germany strengthens local language courses, cultural exchanges



Middle school students learning basic German words.

Photo provided by Goethe-Institut China

By He Jianwei

Three schools in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, will offer German language courses in September, becoming the first to do so in the northeastern Chinese region.

Shenyang Foreign Language School, Shenyang Equipment Manufacturing and Engineering School and Liaoning Province Labor Economy College have joined the project. Schools: Partners for the Future, initiated last year by the German foreign ministry.

The project's goal is to build by 2011 a global network of at least a thousand schools, aimed at stirring people's interest in present-day Germany and its society.

## Cultural exchange as ultimate goal

The German foreign ministry plans to find 80 partner schools in China. Goethe-Institut China, Germany's cultural center, is in charge of identifying 40 schools

and training teachers. In the past year, as many as 20 schools have signed agreements with the center.

"Cities with colleges that offer German as a major, and middle schools that offer it as a foreign language are our first choice," Sebastian Votter, a teaching expert at Goethe-Institut China, said.

The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China and Beijing National Day School opened German courses in 2008. The students can take them as an elective, with classes two to six times a week.

Many Chinese high schools have foreign partner schools, but they seldom have cultural exchanges, Votter said. "You can see photos of the partner school's president visiting, but there is no communication between the schools' students," he said.

High School Affiliated to

Renmin University of China is preparing to send Chinese students to Germany on an exchange program, Votter said, adding that his office also selects several high school students to send there during winter and summer vacations.

"This summer, a group of students will attend a camp, including five from the High School Affiliated to Renmin University and nine from No. 9 Middle School of Qingdao," he said.

## Lack of teachers a big problem

Goethe-Institut China's other important task is to train teachers for its partner schools. "Since we find our partner schools in cities that produce German majors, it is easier for us to find teachers," said Votter, who is in charge of the center's program in northern China.

Every year, about 25 German majors graduate in Shenyang, "but

most of the graduates don't know how to teach high school students," he said.

German courses in their partner schools emphasize class recitation since Chinese students are not very proactive – unlike their German counterparts, Votter said. He noted that few Chinese students participate in class discussions even if they have something to say.

"We will train teachers how to motivate students to open their mouth," he said.

High school teachers also need to be motivated to stay on longer than a year or two, but this is up to the schools. "Every school has its own rules and regulations for choosing teachers. It's already the school president's business," Votter said.

## New path for vocational schools

In Shenyang, Goethe-Insti-

tut has two vocational school partners. German companies in the provincial capital signed an agreement to provide the schools with teachers and internship opportunities. Germany has an advanced vocational school system, something that is new to China.

"Collaboration between German companies and Chinese vocational schools is a win-win solution," Votter said.

Shenyang Equipment Manufacturing and Engineering School has about 7,000 students under age 18; the rest are between 19 and 21. "Many managerial-level staff participate in an exchange program with German companies. We hope skilled workers can also communicate with their German counterparts," Votter said, adding that such programs can help Chinese people land jobs in German companies.



Mikael Lindstrom

Photo by Han Manman

## Sweden embarks on EU presidency

By Han Manman

Dealing with climate change and the financial crisis will be the top priorities of the European Union (EU) for the next six months, said Mikael Lindstrom, ambassador of Sweden, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency.

Sweden's leadership of the 27-nation group comes at a time when Europe is fighting an economic meltdown and trying to craft a new climate change deal, Lindstrom said at a news conference Wednesday. On top of this, the European Parliament is new and the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, is approaching the end of its mandate.

"This presidency is not an

easy task," Swedish prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt recently said, adding that he was envisioning what would be the busiest period of his life.

Lindstrom said Sweden will organize EU summits with some of the world's biggest carbon emitters – the US, China, Russia and Brazil – to pave the way for an agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.

He said Sweden, whose EU presidency ends December, hopes the conference will create a new "regime" to address global warming.

"Copenhagen is an extremely important occasion for the world to find ways to tackle the causes of

climate change," Lindstrom said, adding that the key to the conference's success will be having on board US and China, the world's two biggest emitters.

The ambassador said he understands China needs to balance environmental protection with economic growth, noting that Sweden has a similar experience that might help China.

He said Sweden has developed successful green technology, but more than that, it has come up with a wide range of non-technological measures to battle global warming.

Aside from global warming, the economic crisis is another pressing issue on the Swedish EU

presidency's agenda. The crisis was the result of a financial turmoil brought about by the lack of effective international financial supervision mechanisms, Lindstrom said. Special attention will be given to the monitoring of the banking sector and unemployment figures, he said.

The EU presidency rotates every six months between the group's 27 member-states. The presiding country becomes the driving force of the EU's legislative and political decision-making process. The success of any country holding the presidency hinges on its ability to negotiate between members' competing interests and preserve group unity.



# Sports group introduces handball



Handball China's Beijing members practice at Muxiyuan Sports Center.  
Photo by Guillaume Bours

By Annie Wei

Every Thursday evening, about 30 people gather at the Muxiyuan Sports Center to play handball – a popular team sport in Europe, but a newcomer to China.

The players belong to Handball China, a club formed a year ago to attract members from within Beijing's expat community. Local players are also welcome.

The sport was introduced to China only last year, just before the Olympics, said Guillaume Bours, the group's spokesperson. His friend, an avid handball fan, started the club because he simply wanted to find fellow players. Then the group decided to put more effort in promoting the sport locally.

The club has around 150 members, both men and women, mostly expats. Among them, 30 are serious players who sweat it out at Muxiyuan from 8 to 10 pm every Thursday.

"Everybody is welcome, both experienced players and beginners," Bours said, adding that

handball is not a difficult sport since its rules are simple. Players pay to use the sports center, but first-timers join free.

Bours said the club regularly arranges games with Chinese handball teams, and they are lining up more activities for their members.

## Background

Handball, also known as Team Handball, is a fast-paced game involving two teams of seven players who pass, throw, catch and dribble a small ball with their hands to score goals. The team with the most goals wins the game. A game consists of two 30-minute halves with a 10-minute half-time break.

## Handball China games

Where: Muxiyuan Sports Center, 17 Zhaogongkou, Fengtai District

When: Every Thursday, 8-10 pm

Cost: 50-60 yuan (depends on the number of people who show up)

Email: guillaume.bours@gmail.com

## Event

### Fragrant Hills mountain biking

Bike Beijing group does a day-long tour in Fragrant Hills every weekend. The route is for moderate to advanced riders and lasts nearly eight hours. Be ready for rolling hills, dirt trails and great vistas.

When: July 11, 9 am – 4:30 pm

Tel: 6526 5857;

13381400738

Cost: 1,500 yuan for two people (includes transportation, equipment and guide); 1,200 yuan for people who bring their own bike

### Learn kung fu

Learn the ancient art of kung fu on a peaceful hutong rooftop. Under Master Zhu Feng's guidance, students will learn the basics of the martial art, including defensive techniques, and raise their fitness levels.

Where: 1 Jiudaowang Hutong (Walk from Exit C of Bei Xinqiao stop on Subway Line 5), Dongcheng District

When: July 11, 10:30-11:30 am

Tel: 8915 3613

Cost: 100 yuan; 80 yuan for members

### Storytime: The Three Little Pigs

Diba Kader is from Bangladesh and has taught in Beijing international schools for 20 years, specializing in early childhood education. She would like to show children that stories can be told in many different ways. After a brief introduction of *The Three Little Pigs*, she will do a flannel board story of the children's tale.

Where: Sequoia Cafe, 44 Guanghua Lu (opposite the Brazilian Embassy), Chaoyang District.

When: July 11, 3:30-4:30 pm

Tel: 6585 1435

(By Chen Zao)

## The wonderful world of book swaps

By Annie Wei

The monthly book swap with board games of Sequoia Cafe at Jianguomen is becoming more and more popular.

Fiona Lee, the organizer, said that 50 to 70 people show up at the event held every first Saturday of the month. Each meeting sees hundreds of titles up for grabs. "Every month we have more books, and everything from thriller to non-fiction to chick-lit is available,"

she said.

"If English isn't your thing, there are also French, Dutch and Portuguese books," Lee said. The swap does have a few rules: Books are one for one, and it does not accept textbooks, classics or Chinese-language titles, which are easily available here.

Besides getting rid of an old book and getting a new one for free, the event is an opportunity to make new friends

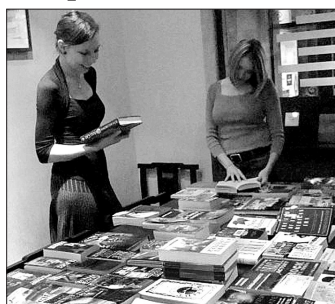
over board games and a cup of tea or coffee.

This month's book swap is not till tomorrow because last Saturday was the Fourth of July or US Independence Day.

Where: Sequoia Cafe, 44 Guanghua Lu (opposite the Brazilian Embassy), Chaoyang District

When: Saturday, July 11, 2-6 pm

Tel: 6501 5503



Book swap at Sequoia Cafe

Photo by Fiona Lee

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# International book fair features Spanish literature and culture

By Han Manman

The Beijing International Book Fair (BIBF) returns to the China International Exhibition Center September 3 to 7 after a year's break.

This year's BIBF will showcase 1,360 exhibits from 56 countries and regions. Eight hundred foreign and multinational publishing groups, including Elsevier, Springer, Harper Collins and Penguin, will set up booths at Hall No. 8, or the International Hall. Many US and British publishers will be coming for the first time.

As the honorary host of this year's fair, Spain will host a series of cultural activities. Ahead of the BIBF's opening, Spanish modern dance troupe Provisional Danza will perform at the Fengchao Theater on August 31. The Spanish cultural center in town, Instituto Cervantes, will host a Baroque concert on September 1, which will feature traditional and modern Spanish culture.

A play based on the Spanish masterpiece *Don Quixote* will also be staged in town, premiering at the National Center for the Per-

forming Arts on September 3. It will be directed by popular playwright and director Meng Jinghui.

"There is no doubt that literature plays an important part in our activities. We will invite well-known Spanish writers to grace literary master classes and lectures, such as Juan Madrid and Jesus Ferrero, whose works have been translated into Chinese," said Inmaculada Gonzalez Puy, director of the Beijing Instituto Cervantes. The institute will also hold several master classes in Spanish writing for advanced students, she said.

From July 14, the Spanish cultural center will hold an exhibit of illustrated literature, which caters to younger readers. The series, titled "outstanding" and organized by the Spanish cultural department, will include some of Spain's most important illustrated works in recent years.

BIBF is considered one of the world's top four book fairs. According to the American Collective Stand (ACS), the Chinese book market is growing at a staggering rate, with English language titles at the forefront, especially those for children.



Readers at the Beijing International Book Fair

CFP Photo

## ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

**I'm looking for tanning products or a tanning salon. What do you recommend?**

Try Bronze Bodies Tanning & Pro Shop, which has advanced tanning equipment and sells international sun-care brands. The shop's staff is friendly, knowledgeable and speaks English.

Where: 6/F, 17 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District.

Tel: 6413 1180

Open: 11:30 am - 9 pm

Cost: tanning sessions 7.50 yuan a minute

**I have a first generation iPhone. One section of the touchscreen doesn't respond anymore. It's out of warranty, but I know it's possible to replace the screen. Is there a place in town that can do this?**

First, you need to check whether or not the touchscreen is really broken. If there's no visible damage, the problem could just be with the wires. There are a few Apple repair shops in Beijing.

Where: 6/F Raise Plaza, 126 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6566 2068

Open: 9 am - 6 pm

Where: Room 1602, 16/F Zhongxin Building, 52 Bei Sihuan Xi Lu, Haidian District

Tel: 8269 7147; 8269 7247

Open: 9 am - 6 pm

**I have an international driver's license and want to rent a car in Beijing. Can you suggest some good rental places?**

Your international driver's license will not be accepted in China; you need to get a local license. When that's taken care of, check out the cars at Shouqi Car Rental Corporation.

Where: 65 Fuxing Lu, Haidian District

Tel: 8827 2020

Where: North gate of Chaoyang Park, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6435 6521

Where: 38 Qingnian Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 8575 7381; 8576 6575

Web site: sqzl.com.cn

(By Chen Zao)

## National Grand Theater's special summer activities



People waiting to get into the National Grand Theater  
Photo by Red Wei

People who visit the National Grand Theater July 2 to August 23 have their pick of special summer activities. On offer are almost 200 kinds of activities, which can cost as little as 15 yuan.

The program highlights interactive activities and lectures in the theater's North Underwater Corridor, Fifth Space Stage, Petal Hall and Arts Information Center.

Tickets may be booked through the National Grand Theater's Web site. Because of age restrictions however, Family Package tickets are only sold at the theater door. The activities are offered every day except Monday.

### Family package

Category A: One parent with one child (those younger than 18 years but taller than 1.2 meters need to present

ID), 40 yuan.

Category B: Two parents with one child (those younger than 18 years but taller than 1.2 meters need to present ID), 65 yuan.

### Summer Activities

What: Romantic Waves (appreciate chamber music)

Where: North Underwater Corridor

When: 1:15-2 pm; 2:30-3:15 pm

What: Music World (develop musical sensitivity)

Where: Fifth Space Stage (at the entrance to the Concert Hall)

When: 2 pm-2:45 pm

What: Fun World (explore the arts through opera, theater and dance)

Where: Petal Hall

When: 3-3:45 pm

(By Chen Zao)

## Witness longest total solar eclipse of 21st century

China is anticipating the 21st century's longest total solar eclipse, which will last up to six minutes July 22. There will be a 250-kilometer-wide belt on which the eclipse can be observed; the best view will be from cities such as Hangzhou, Shanghai, Suzhou, Tongling and Wuhan.

Many activities and tours have been planned for this once-in-a-lifetime event (The next eclipse of this magnitude will not take place until June 13, 2132). The Beijing Planetarium

has organized a tour group that will leave for Wuhan in a few days. Below are other options for people who want a great story to tell their grandchildren.

### Short trip organized by local travel agencies

Beijing Planetarium's sign-up sheet is already filled, but astronomy enthusiasts can still join one to three-day tours organized by local travel agencies. Tongling Kangda Travel Agency in An Hui Province offers more than a dozen "eclipse itineraries," each providing

a cultural experience after observing the heavens' spectacle.

Tel: 13905621112

Cost: 7,000-3,000 yuan, depending on itinerary

Registration deadline: July 21

English service: Available

### Shanghai overnight camp

The two-day camp in Shanghai by outdoor club 93TEAM will begin on July 21. Apart from observing the eclipse, participants will have an overnight camp and a photography competition.

Tel: 021-3762 8536;

13564899170 (Look for Mr Li)

Cost: Free

Registration Deadline: July 15

### Observing partial solar eclipse in Beijing

People in Beijing will be able to see a partial solar eclipse, and one of the best spots is from the Beijing Planetarium.

Where: Beijing Planetarium, 138 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District

When: July 22, 8:25-10:44 am

Tel: 5158 3021

Cost: free

### Things to remember

1. Looking at the sun without proper viewing glasses will damage your eyes since the moon's brightness increases a million times with the sun behind it. Sunglasses and common astronomical telescopes will not do unless special filters are placed. Experts advise watching the sun for only short periods of time.

2. The view of the eclipse will depend on local weather conditions.

(By Ma Mingxuan)



# Grandma van



By Wang Yu

Chang Xiufeng is an illiterate old woman. She spent most of her life in a poor village in Henan Province, the most economically undeveloped area of China, until she moved to Guangzhou to live with Jiang Hua, one of her six children, in 2003.

That year, she picked up her paintbrush to recall the "good old days" on canvas.

Without professional training, Chang ignores perspective and the principles of color harmony followed strictly by most art school painters. Her natural sense of color fuses with her memory of the countryside to capture nostalgia.

And so, Grandma van Gogh was born.



Most of the old houses in Chang's village have been abandoned.

Photos provided by Chang Xiufeng



The sunflowers in Chang's paintings live happily in the field.

## Painting album

"The book caught the attention of the media as soon as it was published. People like to read celebrities' stories, no matter how fake they are. But this book digs into the real life of a normal old woman. Although it has not made it onto the bestseller lists, I am so glad I finally made a book I love," says Chen Ken, publisher of Chang Xiufeng's debut painting book *Grandma van Gogh's World*.

The book contains dozens of Chang's works created since she began painting on the wall of her son Jiang Hua's apartment in 2003. However, her blog brought her Internet fame before the release of the book.

"I was touched by her colorful paintings when I found her blog two years ago. It is very easy to recognize the similar sense she shares with Vincent van Gogh in use of color," Chen says.

Some of the paintings are glaring, as Chang likes to use bright yellow, green and red on the canvas and turn it into a hometown memory. Farms, trees ripe with apples and her children are the stars of most of Chang's paintings.

But that was only the beginning. One of Chang's specialties is the way she shows trees in a Tim Burtonesque composition. Beside her old house was a big tree trying to extend its branches as high as it could in one picture. It looks like the tree is anxious to reach out of the frame like a human trapped.

"As art school graduates, my painter friends and I have to admit that some professors have more insight into nature, people and colors," Chen says. Chang's works are not like the paintings seen as rural souvenirs: they are her biography.

"People in China are losing their ability to sense art and use their imagination. I hope they can rediscover the valuable things in life through this book," Chen says.

## Almost famous

The blog that stunned Chen in 2005 was opened by Jiang Hua, who contributed several articles for the book. He asked his mother to move to Guangzhou after his father died. The old woman had to start a new life in the south.

"She drew her first picture for my daughter," Jiang says. The girl asked her grandmother what was in the field in Chang's hometown. She replied "crabapple trees." To show the girl what they looked like, she picked up the girl's crayons and tried to draw one.

The result could barely be identified as a tree.

But a week later, Jiang and his wife discovered the old lady's new hobby. "As a designer, my wife sensed something special in her paintings and encouraged her to continue," Jiang says.

Chang lived in Henan Province for over 70 years, and life in Guangzhou was a difficult transition. There was no one she was familiar with and the local dialect was too hard to understand. First crayons and then paintbrushes became her friends.

"I think she has a dialogue with herself when drawing. She connects with her past through painting to ease her homesickness and helps me remember my own childhood," Jiang says.

Chang's illiteracy and isolation gave her unlimited room to improve without being influenced by outside information. Jiang, a journalist, had many friends in the media who were curious about Chang's story. They came to his apartment to see her paintings and were shocked by her natural gift. Soon, Grandma van Gogh was thrust into the world of news and invited to art studios. Her blog shot her story around the Internet.

A Hong Kong company organized her first exhibition in 2007. It published an album and donated all proceeds to help build schools in poor areas of the Chinese mainland.

But Jiang says media hype was never his plan for his mother's works. "She's 74 years old now and has problems with her eyes. Painting is just a way for her to express herself. She enjoys working in front of the canvas, that's enough," Jiang says.

## Lost hometown

Jiang's apartment is located near the Guangdong Museum of Art, one of his mother's favorite places to visit. "She doesn't care about the painters or their styles. She goes to art museums to feel emotion in their pictures," Jiang says.

Although she has been nicknamed after the Dutch artist, Chang never knew who Vincent van Gogh was until she was shown his painting for the first time during a TV appearance. His story gave Chang an impression of the painter's inner world.

"To most people, a sunflower should be happy because it always faces the sun and grows up with water from the land. But his sunflower's head is slumped over and its leaves are dry. I think he must have lived a very hard life with pain in his heart," she says.

Chang understands the pain, because she shared that experience in the countryside. "One of what drove me to bring her to Guangzhou is that the old village is unlivable. The village is gone, and the fields of trees were slashed down. No one can survive in the desolate landscape left behind," Jiang says.

The small but typical Chinese village was home to 41 people, nine families all of whom shared the surname Jiang. The village was without a phone prior to 2000, and years of drought decimated their crops.

Gold mines were discovered beside the village in 1989 which offered a ray of hope. But the mines were slow to cough up the metal. The residents earned some money, but the explosion and exploration destroyed what was left of their habitat.

They used the money to build newer, safer houses, and decided to try logging like the neighboring villages. They cut down their groves and sold the wood: big trees to lumber and small ones as charcoal.

These memories appear in Chang's paintings of green fields covered with sunflowers and dead trees beside rotting houses.

But even the destruction of her hometown has not shaken the tolerance so characteristic of China's peasants. Chang says she hopes to draw more pictures to recall her old days, whether happy or painful.

"An era disappeared with those old houses and trees," Jiang says. Chang's era.

While her paintings have drawn many prospective buyers, Jiang says he plans to keep the book as a family treasure. "Fame means nothing to a 74-year-old village woman," Jiang says.

But Chang may deserve fame, because her paintings carry a hidden power. "An invisible view of life is something lost in each of us – that we are nostalgic for. Somehow, these paintings have a way to bring that back out," Jiang says.



# Gogh's canvas



Her small but typical village was home to 41 people, nine families who shared the surname Jiang.



Chang recalls the good old days through her paintings.







By Charles Zhu

Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, died of cardiac arrest on June 25. Publishers are scrambling to release unauthorized biographies as people gather to remember the superstar who fell as sharply as he rose.

*Unmasked: the Final Years of Michael Jackson* (224pp, Transit, US \$16.87) by Montreal-born author Ian Halperin, hit the presses the night Jackson died. It originally was meant to coincide with his London concert series. Canadian readers will be the first to have access to this book. Transit sold the rights to the French edition to Hachette Livre, and to the US printing to Simon & Schuster.

According to press reports, Halperin, biographer of Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté, says his book is a "vindication" of Jackson, whose name was dragged through the mud during

allegations of child abuse. One of the children who accused Jackson of sexual abuse reportedly confessed that he had lied at the behest of his impoverished father.

"We hope that this book will give him back his reputation as much as we can – his glory as an artist – because we feel that he had been destroyed morally, psychologically and also as an artist by all these accusations and by the way his entourage was pressuring him out of greed to do those London concerts," Halperin said in an interview.

Jackson was born in Gary, Indiana, on August 29, 1958. His father, Joseph Jackson, was a guitarist but gave up his musical ambitions after marrying Katherine. Together they tried to cultivate a musical interest in their kids. Michael was a prodigy, and his singing and dancing were a hit with the public. He soon became the front man of The Jackson 5. By 1969 the boys were producing hits as Motown artists ("I Want You Back," "ABC," "Never Can Say Goodbye," "Got to Be There").

In the ensuing decade,

they emerged as one of the most accomplished black pop and soul groups on the music scene.

By 1982 Michael had become extremely popular with *Thriller*, the biggest-selling album of all time. But in the next decade he found the negative side of fame. He drastically changed his physical appearance, and his behavior grew increasingly bizarre. He had two short-lived marriages, one to Elvis Presley's daughter Lisa Marie Presley. The marriage seemed image-oriented.

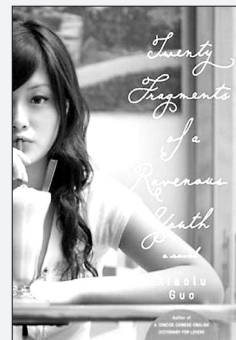
It is a heart-stirring pity that after four years of seclusion and a month from his sold-out London concert series *Comeback* in July, he died at his home. The cause of Jackson's death remains under investigation, though early media reports speculated it may be connected to the sedative Diprivan, also called Propofol, which was discovered in his home. It is a powerful anesthetic used in operating theaters to induce unconsciousness. Authorities suspect the singer used pseudonyms to acquire prescription painkillers, sedatives and antidepressants.

In spite of his weaknesses and troubled adult life, Jackson's unparalleled talents as a singer and a dancer, and as a business-minded artist will never be matched. Years of scandal and defamation could not sever the support of his millions of dedicated fans, who will remember him forever.

# Unmasking the King of Pop

## Bookworm book listing

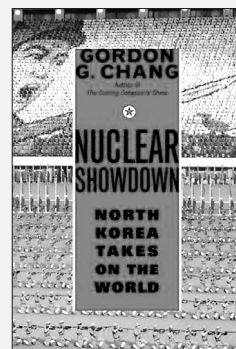
Vivian Wang from the Bookworm recommends the following best sellers to *Beijing Today* readers.



### 20 Fragments of a Ravenous Youth

By Xiaolu Guo, 224pp, Vintage, US \$32.95

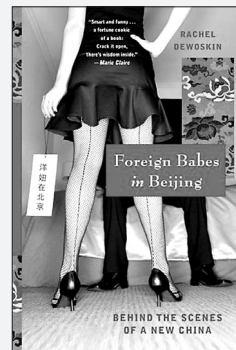
Life as a film extra in Beijing might seem hard, but Fenfang – the spirited heroine of Xiaolu Guo's new novel – will not be defeated. She traveled 1,800 miles to seek her fortune in the city, and has no desire to return to the endless sweet potato fields back home. Determined to live a modern life, Fenfang works as a cleaner in a movie theater, falls in love with unsuitable men and keeps her kitchen cupboard stocked with UFO instant noodles.



### Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes on the World

By Gordon G. Chang, 352pp, Random House, US \$25.95

The conflict with Kim Jong Il is a crisis like none other, perhaps the 21st century's moment of greatest consequence. This is when the history of the next hundred years will be written. *Nuclear Showdown* is the first and only major study to look at all dimensions of this crisis. Gordon Chang proposes solutions that go beyond the conventional suggestions seen elsewhere.



### Foreign Babes in Beijing: Behind the Scenes of a New China

By Rachel DeWoskin, 352pp, W. Norton, US \$13.95

Determined to broaden her cultural horizons and live a "fiery" life, 21-year-old Rachel DeWoskin hops on a plane to Beijing to work for an American PR firm in the busy capital. Before she knows it, she is not just exploring the culture but also creating it as the sexy, aggressive, fearless Jiexi, the starring femme fatale in a wildly successful soap opera.

(By He Jianwei)

## Adult readers find deep thoughts in pre-school book

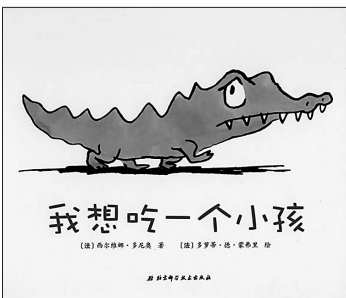
By He Jianwei

While it may be an expensive book – priced as high as 1 yuan per page – *I'd Really Like to Eat a Child* is topping book lists at douban.com: 2,200 people have read it, and another 2,700 would like to read it.

*I'd Really Like to Eat a Child* (24pp, Beijing Science & Technology Press, 24.80 yuan) is a picture book for preschoolers by French author-illustrator team Sylviane Donnio and Dorothee de Monfreid.

In the 24-page book, the small crocodile Picky Achilles decides one morning that he has out-grown his diet of bananas. He tells his mother he would like to eat a child. Despite the delicious sausage and chocolate cake his parents make to satiate his appetite, Achilles is insistent.

When Achilles walks down to a river, he notices a young girl sitting by the riverbank. It looks like his culinary dream might come true. But he is so small and weak with hunger



that the girl just bullies him and tells him to get stronger.

It motivates Achilles to resume his banana diet so he can get bigger and stronger to eventually eat the child.

It seems like a simple story to teach preschoolers to eat well, but for Chinese adult readers it is an adult fairy tale.

More than 60 percent of adult readers gave it a four-star rating for being entertaining and deeply thoughtful.

Many readers said they were attracted to the title first, and said

the book is not only for children, also for adults.

Some believe "to eat a child" is a metaphor for the small crocodile's dream. "No matter what kind of food his parents offer him, Achilles always turns it down to insist on his dream," Vincent Lee, a medical school student, said.

The crocodile's story reminds him of childhood. "Every child has a dream: to be a teacher, a policeman or a chef. And their parents always placed their own hopes on their children, but that tends to cause children to react against their parents' wishes," he said.

Others said the book was for parents and tells them how to educate children. In this case, the crocodile's nature is to eat meat, but Achilles' parents ask him to eat bananas. "As a parent, you must educate your child to follow his or her nature. You can't force him or her to always do as you wish," Tracy Liu, a college lecturer, said.



# Amateur crews bring drama to life



By Zhang Dongya

Amateur drama continues at the first Beijing White-collar Drama Festival starting July 17. The festival, organized by the Beijing Municipal Playwrights Association, continues the "Non-career, Non-commercial" festival that began last month.

The six selected drama troupes consist entirely of amateur performers who put on a professional show. The admission price of 20 yuan, substantially less than the usual cheapest 100 to 180 yuan, brings theater into the price range of Beijing's masses for the first time.

"To some extent, [the troupes] are the ones bringing drama back to the people," Yang Qianwu, vice president of the association, says.



## Dawn of amateur theater

Wang Ziyue cried as the applause came in waves when the curtain fell on the finale of *Say Farewell to Angel of My Life* last December at the Chaoyang Cultural Theater's SARS Hall.

The 28-year-old producer, adapter and director of the drama was one of the first members of Qingyi Drama Society, the capital's best-known amateur drama group. He joined in 2007, four months after the group formed.

During his college years, Wang was

part of the school's drama club. Graduation found him working in a state-owned company, but his "dreams of drama never left," he says.

"I love performing, and only after joining Qingyi did I find happiness in life," he says.

Qingyi's members come from all walks of life – and from all jobs: sales clerks, IT staff, lawyers, doctors and managers. But all share one thing: a love of drama.

The troupe has ballooned to more than

a hundred members, over 20 of who have taken to the stage since joining.

Every Wednesday evening and Saturday, the group meets to rehearse and perform. When it is time for a big performance, like a festival, the group meets daily after work for a month.

Qingyi formed during a boom year for amateur drama: several groups got their start in 2007, including Sanlitun Gebi and Polar Bear, as well as many who have yet to perform in public.

## Venue, money trouble

Finding somewhere to rehearse is the biggest problem for any new troupe.

Sanlitun Gebi Drama Society, founded by Peipei, a movie and TV playwright in March, 2007, arranged a cooperation for his society with the Sanlitun Street Community. The community provides a site every Saturday, and Sanlitun Gebi helps the community organize recreational events.

Qingyi has relocated many times, most recently to Shangba near Wanda Plaza. Since the groups are non-profit, they depend on the kindness of friends or acquaintances for a venue.

Sanlitun Gebi only collects 10 yuan per year from its members. Its main funding comes from companies who call on it to perform at New Year's parties or other big events. "Every year, we are hired by five or six businesses, and each performance brings in several thousand yuan," Peipei says.

Qingyi works on a similar model. "Some (businesses) want to hold a creative and impressive press conference, so they hire us to stage a short drama before their news release," Wang Ziyue says. "It is too expensive to hire a professional drama troupe, but we can do a great show at a low price."

## Not unprofessional

But being amateur says nothing about the quality of these troupes. Most have strict policies for attendance and being late.

Performers are required to attend classes on time in Sanlitun Gebi. New applicants are interviewed rigorously to see whether they are fit to appear with the troupe.

"[Theater] may not be our occupation, but that does not mean we cannot be professional. We are getting more and more opportunities to perform in public. Our audience is demanding, so we have to work harder," Wang, from Qingyi, says.

## Drama for the people

Beijing Municipal Playwrights Association began to hold its University Drama Festival in 2001. Last year, it began hosting biannual drama festivals for the city's office worker troupes.

Drama remains a symbol of the bourgeois in China, with its high-brow themes and equally high admission. Outside of major hubs like Beijing or Shanghai, drama remains nonexistent.

Yang Qianwu, vice president of the association, sums up the situation in one word: "weird."

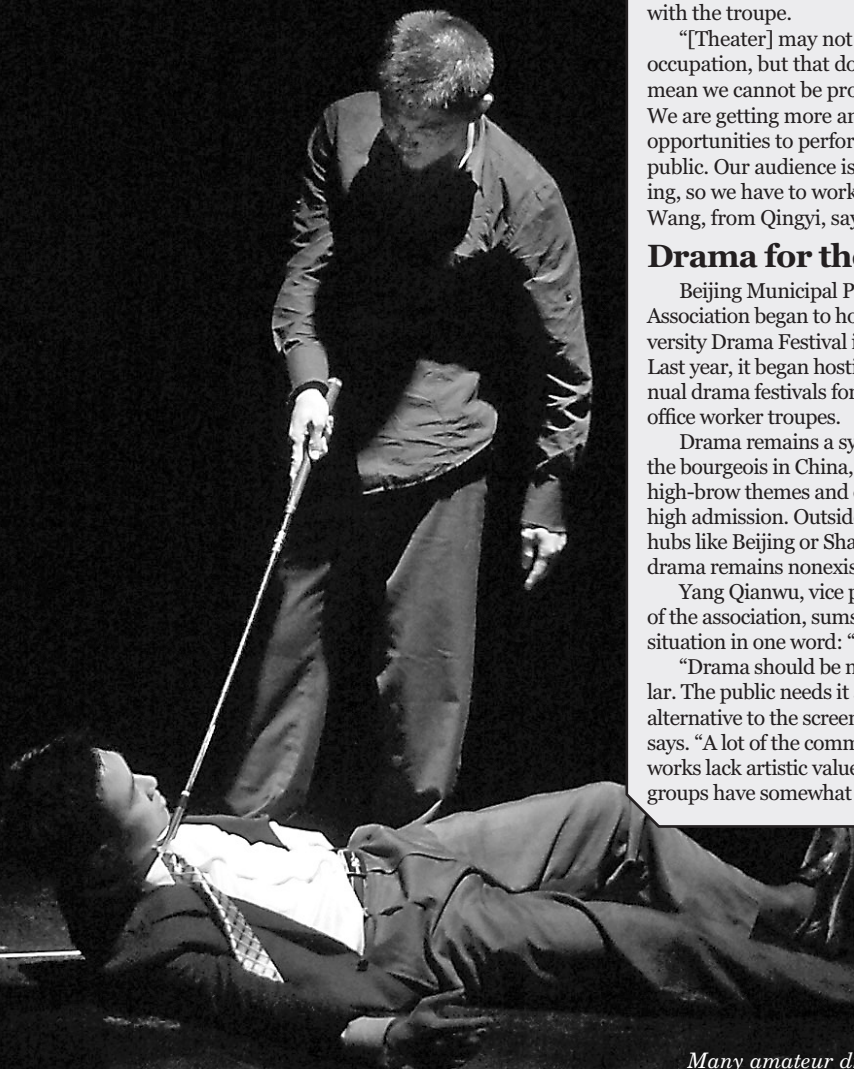
"Drama should be more popular. The public needs it as an alternative to the screen," he says. "A lot of the commercial works lack artistic value. Amateur groups have somewhat solved the

problem. Since they do not face market pressure, they can pursue both art and value."

In Yang's opinion, amateur drama groups tend to choose stories set in urban life and show what is happening around them. It is what keeps them close to the pulse of the public, Yang says.

"They prefer to be original rather than adapt the classics, and that is the right way to do it. It is harder to adapt a classic because it is classic. An original drama is always more welcome," he says.

During last month's drama festival, two troupes from Shanghai came to appear on stage. Yang says he hopes more amateur drama troupes can join in to make future festivals a truly national event.



Many amateur drama troupes of the last few years are preparing to go professional.

Photos by Zhang Rui



# Old homes, new look, new residents

## Hutong hotels for summer guests

By Annie Wei

Summer is a busy season for entertaining guests from out of town or overseas. People who have a cramped apartment or who have difficulty finding a short-term one for their visitors should check out *hutong* inns or hotels. Nothing beats the experience of being immersed in a traditional Beijing atmosphere from dusk to dawn.

### West meets East design

Duge, a boutique hotel inspired by a courtyard home, is hidden in a quiet hutong close to the Nanluogu Xiang dining and shopping area. Passersby who have no clue will not believe it's a hotel because next to its red-and-blue doors is a sign that says, "no visiting."

Besides providing a "courtyard experience," there is no doubt – as Duge claims – that it offers privacy.

The hotel's decor gives it special character. The owner, after whom the place was named, is a local businesswoman who treasures hutong life. When Du Ge first saw the original courtyard home, she immediately envisioned on it a modern hotel that incorporated traditional courtyard architecture. She hired the Belgian-Chinese designer team of Jehanne de Bolly and Liu Linian, who renovated the building and decorated the interior with lacquered furniture and rich fabric.

Du put many of her personal collections in the guest rooms to share with tourists who are interested in Chinese culture. Some of the items were produced by ethnic minorities, while others tell of the imperial lifestyle.

Each room has a predominant color to reflect its theme. For example, Peony Pavilion, named after a drama from the Ming Dynasty, has patterns of red peonies and green leaves on glass screens, curtains and sofa covers.

Since the hotel formally opened this year, it is offering rooms at a promotional rate: Standard rooms cost 1,200 yuan a night; suites are 1,800 yuan a night. It also has two rooms (800 yuan a night) specially designed for children.

Each room has a matching bath or shower. Black paper-cuts adorn the courtyard-facing windows.

Many guests fall in love with the Bamboo Room, Simone Liu, the hotel's marketing and public relations officer, said. The suite features a bamboo-shaped wood-carved moon gate, a circular opening in ancient garden

walls that served as a passageway.

The gate dates back 150 years and the original owners requested it be kept, so Du and her designers decided to turn it into one of their premier rooms. The hotel used to be a residence called Suojia Garden; its first owner was Ming Shan, minister of the imperial household in the Qing dynasty.

The hotel also provides 24-hour butler and kitchen service.

### Duge hotel

Where: 26 Qianyan'ensi Hutong, Dongcheng District  
Tel: 6406 0686  
Web site: [dugecourtyard.com](http://dugecourtyard.com)

### A southern garden in the heart of Beijing

Located in Beijing's historic core – walking distance from the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square and Wangfujing Avenue – the Peking International Youth Hostel offers accommodations in a courtyard house with a garden reminiscent of idyllic Yunnan Province.

The hostel is set apart from other courtyard lodging houses by its flower and vegetable garden. Its owner, interior designer Gao Gao, and his partner Fei Fei, filled the garden with plants such as roses and peppermint leaves.

Its wood-constructed common area is a haven from the summer heat; guests congregate there to chat, read or surf the Internet. In the winter, they relax on the sofa with a mug of tea or coffee.

It has more than 20 guest rooms, among which are "dormitories" (80 yuan per bed a day), standard rooms (400 yuan per day) and luxury rooms (500 yuan per day).

"You cannot place too many dormitory rooms because the hostel is a bit too small for too many guests," Gao said. Each room has air-conditioning and the hostel has a cook that can prepare simple Chinese and

Western breakfast.

Guests have free use of the hostel's wireless Internet, and the front desk can help with getting phone cards, doing laundry, and providing luggage storage and travel information.

### Peking International Youth Hostel

Where: 5 Bei Chizi'er Tiao Dajie, Dongcheng District  
Tel: 6526 8855 (reserve a month ahead especially in the summer)



Peking International Youth Hostel  
Photo by Gao Gao



Duge hotel's lobby



Duge hotel's courtyard



Duge Hotel's Bamboo Room



Peony Pavilion room of Duge Hotel  
Photos by Zhou Zhiyi

### Other hutong hotels

#### Hutongren

Hutongren is a small, homey hostel off one of Nanluogu Xiang's hutong. It offers loft rooms for up to three people and each has a private bathroom.

Hutongren has only eight rooms, priced 260 to 380 yuan a night, breakfast included. Guests are advised to book four to five days ahead.

Where: 71 Ju'er Hutong, Dongcheng District  
Tel: 8402 5238

#### The Bamboo Garden Hotel

It has Chinese courtyard-style structure in a quiet lane west of the

Drum Tower. The halls and pavilions are linked by tortuous, long corridors, with a tranquil surrounding of bamboo groves, rockeries, and fountains.

Where: 24 Xiaoshi Qiao, Jiugulou Dajie, Xicheng District  
Tel: 5852 0088

#### Hejingfu Hotel

Located down a hutong alley inside the Second Ring Road, not far from Houhai and other tourist spots, this is a budget hotel with rooms from 320 yuan per night.

Where: 7 Zhangjizhong Lu, Dongcheng District  
Tel: 8401 3571

#### Youhao Hotel

It used to be a prince's mansion and became an office building in the 1940s and 1950s. It was the embassy of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and has been a hotel since the 1980s. Because it mainly houses diplomats and government officers, many people know little about it. It has a small courtyard; the fake mountains were from the Summer Palace and the main building has an Italian style.

Where: 7 Houyuan'ensi Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District  
Tel: 6403 1114





Cambulac's small courtyard garden

By Annie Wei

A person's best memories of sipping wine are usually ones in which the drink is shared with good company. *Beijing Today* cannot provide you with great drinking companions, but we'll tell you about wine shops that recently opened in the city's hutong.



Cambulac's wine collection

Photos by Gao Gao

# Creating unforgettable memories of wine

## New wine shops in Beijing's hutong



New wine shop Cambulac

### Artsy Italian shop

Cambulac is a welcome surprise to people who miss the "old" Nanluogu Xiang, when the hutong community used to be less crowded, with quieter cafes and bars to savor a glass of wine.

The shop, tucked in Bei Bingmasi Hutong, does not have a sign and could be mistaken for a courtyard home. Once customers enter its gate, they will see a newly renovated courtyard with a pomegranate tree, an auspicious symbol because of its fire-red flowers, fruits and seeds.

In the southern room, a wall of wine bottles can be seen through a glass window. Its dozens of new wine are shipped straight from Italy.

The northern room contains antique tables and chairs, and a kitchen for preparing snacks like cheese or chocolate.

Gary Price, one of Cambulac's owners, has been doing business in China for 25 years. He said the shop's name comes from an entry in Marco Polo's journal, in which the 13th century Italian explorer called Beijing Cambulac.

In a city where wine stores are sprouting like mushrooms, Cambulac wants to find its niche as an Italian wine specialist. With 900 types of grapes, Price said Italy has the widest variety of wine – a real challenge for a person who wants to try them all.

The shop's merchandise comes from nine major wine-producing regions such as Piedmont, Liguria, Veneto, Tuscany and Sicily.

Apart from good wine, the place also offers visual art. When *Beijing Today* visited last week, there was a photo exhibition and an installation – a washing room combined with a flight of stairs to the rooftop – created by architect Ma Yansong, famous for his winning design of the Absolute Tower in Toronto, Canada.

It's a shame to just go inside Cambulac, grab a few bottles and then go. Its ambiance is meant to be enjoyed, like most Italian wine shops. So come for a visit, open a bottle and enjoy it in the courtyard, the antique furniture room or on the rooftop. This is the best of Italy in the best of Beijing.

#### Cambulac

Where: 38 Bei Bingmasi Hutong, Dongcheng District  
Open: 10 am – 10 pm  
Tel 6402 5301  
Cost: 300 to 3,000 yuan a bottle  
Web site: cambulac.cn

### Wines recommended at Cambulac

Price recommends three kinds wines (from left to right): Grillo IGT 2008 from Sicily (217 yuan), a very fresh white wine, is a staple of Sicilian cuisine. It is an everyday wine that goes well with many kinds of food, even spicy frog's legs.

Lambrusco Grasparossa DOC 2008 Terre al Sole (243 yuan) from Emilia-Romagna is a frizzante (lightly sparkling) low alcohol red wine from a region with Italy's most famous foods. He recommends it with Chinese dumplings.

Monferrato Rosso DOC 2005 Rouchet Briccorosa (312 yuan) from Piemonte is a rare low tannin violet-colored, berry-scented wine. He recommends it with wild mushrooms like porcini.



Photos by Gao Gao

### Boutique wineries and filling food

Palette Vino is an international chain wine store that has built a solid reputation among wine aficionados. It has five branches in town scattered in Shunyi, the central business district and the Dong Sishi Tiao area.

The company wants to provide value for money and focuses on putting up boutique wineries. These shops, which do not have a big inventory, concentrate on popular brands that are not necessarily pricey, said Palette Vino's Beijing manager, Gai Yongjun.

The courtyard and rooftop of its shop on Dong Si Shiyi Tiao Hutong are still being renovated. In the mean time, customers can sip a glass of wine or a cup of coffee in the courtyard home's dining room, which serves as a restaurant.

The cozy dining area with European decor has shelves lined with 300 kinds of wines, most of which are exclusively distributed worldwide by Palette Vino. Bottles cost between 150 and 1,300 yuan. People who choose not to drink their purchases in the shop get 10 percent off; those who buy four bottles or more get a 20-percent discount.

Customers who order by the glass (35 to 40 yuan) can choose from among five white wines, one rose and seven red wines. It was awarded Best Wine Experience by *TimeOut Beijing* magazine in its 2008 Eating Out Awards.

People looking for a place to chill out can come here to read or work on their laptop. It's also a nice place for a friendly or romantic date. Palette Vino's restaurant serves a three-course set meal for 118 yuan and a four-course meal for 138 yuan.

Its starters include grilled chicken slices wrapped in pancetta and Caprese salad mozzarella. Its menu has entrees such as poached duck breast in rice wine-flavored broth and pasta with prawns, roasted pepper and courgettes in pesto sauce. Its desserts include Tiramisu

with  
gingered  
apricot compot  
– a place to create  
good memories of drinking  
and eating.

#### Palette Vino

Where: 5 Dong Si Shiyi Tiao, Dongcheng District (Since Dong Si Shiyi Tiao is a one-way street, with traffic moving from west to east, it is better to get off at its east end Chaoyang Nan Xiaojie, then walk the five to 10 meters to the shop.)

When: Monday to Thursday, 2-11 pm; Friday to Sunday, 2 pm – 1 am

Cost: Starts at 35 yuan for a glass of wine; 150 for a bottle

Tel: 6405 4855

Other locations

Where: Next to Central Park (between Jinguang Plaza and Kerry Center), Chaoyang District

Tel: 6533 6605

Where: Pinnacle Plaza, Tianzhu Development Zone, Shunyi District  
Tel: 8046 4461



Palette Vino Photo by Wendy Zha

#### Vineyard Cafe

This was one of the first hutong cafes to offer a good selection of wine. It has built a following for its cozy atmosphere and menu of organic vegetables from Yunnan Province. It also has live Jazz nights and home deliveries.

Where: 31 Wudaoying Hutong (close to the Lama Temple), Dongcheng District

Open: Tuesday to Sunday, 11: 30 am – 11: 30 pm

Tel: 6402 7961

Cost: 50 yuan

#### La Baie des Anges

Although it's just a stone's throw away from the Houhai restaurant and bar area, it's a quiet and comfy place to enjoy a glass of wine. Run by two French brothers, the bar has a selection of over 40 kinds of wines at affordable prices.

Where: 5 Nanguanfang Hutong, Houhai, Xicheng District

Open: Tuesday to Sunday, 6 pm – 2 am

Tel: 6657 1605

Cost: Starts at 35 yuan



# Vintage fashion meets music from the 60s and 70s

By Wang Yu

Lovers of music from the 60s and 70s get their prayers answered with a concert at Yugongyishan next Saturday. Organized by youth fashion chain store Arrtco, the show will feature two of the hottest bands in town — Joyside and Queen Sea Big Shark — plus Golden Driver as special guest.

With Fu Han on the mic, controversial for her imitation of foreign artists, Queen Sea Big Shark has been a big name on the domestic music scene for years. Fu, a brilliant female rocker, won the group loads of fans with her glorious performances.

The band's disco drum beats and the rough and fuzzy guitar sounds created by Cao Pu earned it the reputation of being China's version of the American alternative rock band Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Queen Sea Big Shark has also been described as a dance rock group, a minor genre in the indie music scene, because of the synthesized dance samples it shows off in concerts.

Fu's fashion sense is similar to that of Karen O, lead singer of Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Fu says she loves everything that glitters and combines 1980's clothing styles with the latest trends.

"That's also the reason why we invited this band. It's not only a concert but also a party for stylish young people," Zhang Qiu-

biao, the event's organizer, said. Concert-goers are invited to come in their most imaginative outfit.

The other feature performer, Joy-side, was born in a dim basement in northern Beijing in 2001. Three years later, the four-man band released their debut album and did a nationwide tour. Its lead singer, Bian Yuan, lucked it out in Beijing after making a big move for music from his native Xinjiang Province.

Dead Boys, New York Dolls, Sex Pistols and the Stooges are just some of Joyside's inspirations; the band's music reflects the same decadence, which sometimes almost feels like innocent love. Besides their music, the group became the local leader of underground trends with their 1970s British dressing style.

The fashion of Queen Sea Big Shark and Joyside, including Golden Driver, reflect the "downtown" theme of Arrtco's latest collection. "Queen Sea Big Shark for urban, Joyside for underground and Golden Driver for unique perfectly bring out the concept," Zhang said. Arrtco caters to the post-1980s urban generation and carries many Chinese independent fashion labels.



Tickets for the concert will no longer be sold at the door, but *Beijing Today* readers can get in with a copy of this article.

## Welcome to the downtown

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District  
When: July 18, 8:30 pm – 12 midnight  
Tel: 6404 2711

## Upcoming

### Movie

#### Documentary: The Other Shore

Where: No. 3 Club, 43 Beisanhuan Xi Lu (in the courtyard of the Beijing Qingyun Company), Haidian District  
When: July 14, 7:30 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 8211 5288

## Stage in August

### Concert

#### Audio-visual Concert of Symphonic and Wind Music

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 1, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 10-100 yuan  
Tel: 6605 7006

#### Violin and Piano Concert by Sheng Zhongguo and Seta Hiroko

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), Dongcheng District

When: August 3-4, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 10-100 yuan  
Tel: 6559 8306

#### Italian Pianist Paolo Vergari

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), Dongcheng District

When: August 13, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 10-100 yuan  
Tel: 6559 8306

#### Iberia – Guillermo Gonzalez Piano Recital

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 23, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-480 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

### Dance

#### The Rain of Flowers along the Silk Road

Who: Gansu Dance Drama and Opera Ensemble

Where: Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 1-2, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-580 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

### Onegin

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 19-22, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-500 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

#### Prism – International Contemporary Dances

Where: People's Liberation Army Opera House, 60 Deshengmen Nei Dajie, Xicheng District

When: August 28-29, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 60-580 yuan  
Tel: 6673 6623

### Opera

#### Ode to the Red Chinese Plum by the PLA Air Force Political Department's Art Troupe

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 7-9, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-480 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

(By Jackie Zhang)

## 5 Friday, July 10

### Exhibition



#### Children's Epoch Group Exhibition

Where: Aura Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: Until July 19, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free  
Tel: 8459 8390

#### Juvenilia – Constructing a Soul in Capitalist Societies

Where: Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until July 12, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 5978 9530

### Nightlife

#### D-22 Show

Where: D-22 Bar, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 10 pm  
Admission: 40 yuan  
Tel: 6265 3177

#### Night for Literary Girls

Where: Zhuomicang Bar, 503 Dingfuzhuang Bei Jie, Chaoyang District

When: 9 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 13693669400

#### Talk in Gulou

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm  
Admission: 50 yuan  
Tel: 6402 5080

## 6 Saturday, July 11

### Exhibition

#### Transforming Pictures – A Contemporary (Re) presenting of Traditional Thoughts

Where: National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until July 18, daily, 9 am – 5 pm  
Admission: 20 yuan  
Tel: 6400 6326



#### Chen Siran

#### Photography Exhibition

Where: Story Garden

Cafe, 9 Beizhan Bei Jie, Xicheng District

When: Until July 19, daily, 11 am – 10 pm

Admission: Free  
Tel: 8832 0741

### Movie

#### Peacock

Where: Lady's Book Saloon, 69 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 7 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 6270 1928

### Nightlife

#### Sound Fragment

Where: Star Live, 79 Hepingli Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm  
Admission: 60 yuan  
Tel: 6425 5677

#### Wang Juan's Show

Where: Wild Strawberry Cafe, 52 Houhai Nanyan, Xicheng District

When: 9 pm  
Admission: 30 yuan  
Tel: 8328 4250

## 7 Sunday, July 12

### Exhibition

#### Classic Found Museum Collections

Where: 1 Art Base, Hegezhuang Village, Cuigezhuang, Chaoyang District

When: Until August 2, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 6433 7617



#### Mythical Roots

Where: Soka Art Center Beijing, Room 101-103, Building

B, Tianhai Business Tower, 107 Dongsu Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until July 26, daily except Monday, 10 am – 9 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 8401 2377

### Movie

#### Phantom of the Opera

Where: Hot Cat Club, 46 Fangjia Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 2:30 pm  
Admission: 20 yuan  
Tel: 6400 7868

### Nightlife

#### Greening the Stage

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 8 pm  
Admission: 50 yuan  
Tel: 6404 2711

#### Zhang Qianqian's Ballad

Where: D-22 Bar, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 9 pm  
Admission: 40 yuan  
Tel: 6265 3177



# Healthy babies start with healthy sperm

By Venus Lee

New research shows sperm counts among many university students in Guangxi fail to meet the standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO). The study, conducted by the Andrology Center at the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi Medical University, shows a deficiency in 56 percent of tested students.

Declining sperm counts is a problem that extends far beyond China. "Meta-analysis of more than 60 global studies in the past 50 years found men from more than 20 countries have shown a decline in sperm count. Some birth studies provided direct evidence linking deteriorating semen quality with congenital defects," Liang Jihong, director of the center, said.

The new study, which may be a shock to new couples preparing to start a family, also suggests that engaging in daily sex may improve the genetic quality of a man's sperm and raise his chances of fathering a child.

## Diet before drugs

However, according to traditional Chinese Medicine Philosophy, poor sperm quality and count are caused by kidney problems, Liu Xiouen, a doctor at Beijing Tianlun Fertility Hospital, said.

"Kidney trouble falls into one of three categories: deficiency of kidney qi, yang or yin," she said. According to clinical analysis, the low seminal fluid output is a yin deficiency, while a low sperm count is related to all three.

Zhou Qinlu, a nutritionist at Beijing Civil Health Condition Survey and Supervision Center, said drug therapy for men with fertility problems should be the last resort. Diet and lifestyle changes are almost always the most effective way to alleviate fertility troubles.

**1. Eat foods rich in magnesium.** "Oatmeal with milk and bananas are a good breakfast option," she said. "Foods rich in magnesium like oatmeal, soy beans, potatoes, walnut kernels, noodles and leafy vegetables can nourish the blood and increase sperm."

**2. Eat foods containing L-arginine.** It is an essential basic amino acid involved in urea metabolism and excretion and DNA synthesis, which aids sperm movement. "Sea pumpkins, eel, loach, cuttlefish, sesame, Chinese yams, ginkgo fruits, tofu, peanuts, sunflower seeds and hazelnuts have long been regarded as the best foods to enhance sperm," she said.

**3. Eat foods rich in zinc.** "Zinc is an essential mineral required by sex hormones and can strengthen a sperm's vitality," she said. Pumpkin seeds, onions, ginger, tomatoes, oysters, shrimp, clams, liver, walnuts and lotus seeds are zinc-rich, but nutrition-isameat contains half the daily requirement.

**4. Eat foods rich in calcium.** "A calcium deficiency will make sperm sluggish and less active, so foods rich in calcium also play an important role in fertilization," she said. Milk, bean products, rib soup, sea tangles, lily flowers, mushrooms, almonds and raisins are good sources of calcium.

Sperm quality can also be related to the presence of fructose in the seminal vesicles. Low fructose presence can cause sperm death, so honey and fruits rich in sugars are also indispensable. "Men should eat pears, apples, grapes, pineapples and oranges frequently," she said.

Studies have shown that men who ate more fruits and vegetables have better sperm quality compared to men who did not. This has been attributed to the high antioxidant content of fruits and vegetables, which can reduce oxidative stress and consequently improve sperm count and mobility.

## Parents need more sex

Couples who are trying for a baby are often advised to have sex every other day to give the man's sperm count time to replenish, but scientists in Australia have discovered this may diminish fertility in many men. They said sex helps reduce DNA damage in sperm by removing it quickly from the body; when sperm remains in the body too long, it develops an increased chance of damage.

A study at Sydney IVF, a center for infertility treatment, found that daily sex for a seven-day period substantially improved the genetic quality of a man's sperm without substantially diminishing his sperm count.

David Greening, research leader, said having sex twice a day during the woman's most fertile period could be crucial to starting a family.

The results were announced last Tuesday at a meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology in Amsterdam and could have important implications for couples considering in-vitro fertilization (IVF).

Men are usually advised to avoid ejaculating for three days prior to providing a sperm sample for IVF. Consequentially, many couples do not have regular sex during the IVF procedure.

Doctors said that when men go without ejaculating, the number of sperm stored in the epididymis at the top of the testicles increases. As the sperm remain there, they become exposed to heat and free radicals which can introduce genetic damage.

Daily sex may be more fertile sex, and that by clearing the epididymis and testicles, DNA damage has less time to set in, Greening said.

He and colleagues studied 118 men with high levels of DNA damage in their sperm and instructed them to have sex every day for a week. After seven days, the doctors found that DNA damage decreased in 81 percent of the men, though it increased slightly in the remaining 19 percent.

## Tips

### 1. Get regular exercise

Adopt a moderate-intensity fitness regimen to keep your body in shape. While it is good to push yourself and exercise daily, do not go all out. Extreme exercise will raise the body temperature too much and kill many sperm. Long hours of driving can also damage one's sperm count.

### 2. Relax

Stress has been found to significantly affect the quantity and quality of sperm, so avoid stressful activities and engage in relaxation activities like yoga, walking or simple breathing exercises.

### 3. Avoid frequent sauna

If you're thinking of hitting the sauna to relax, think again. The scrotum is designed to protect the testicles from extreme temperatures by raising or lowering them in response to environmental temperature. Prolonged exposure to hot baths may even impair fertility.

### 4. Quit bad habits

Avoid smoking or drugs and keep alcohol consumption to a minimum. While smoking and drugs have been proven by several studies to lower sperm count, the effect of alcohol on male fertility is still the topic of several arguments; some studies show that alcohol has negative effects while some indicate otherwise.

When your goal is to improve sperm health, it is always best to err on the side of safety and eliminate all such bad habits. Avoid marijuana, cocaine and other controlled substances. These can destroy the fertilizing ability of sperm, and can hinder the production of new sperm.

### 5. Say no to anesthetics

Anesthetics jeopardizes sperm quality. Such drugs usually have long-lasting side effects.

### 6. No phones in pants

Carrying a mobile phone in your pants pocket, using a laptop on your legs or wearing tight pants can impact scrotal temperature and damage sperm quality.



CFP Photo



# New eyes on Beijing

## A 'Parkour tour' of the city

By He Jianwei

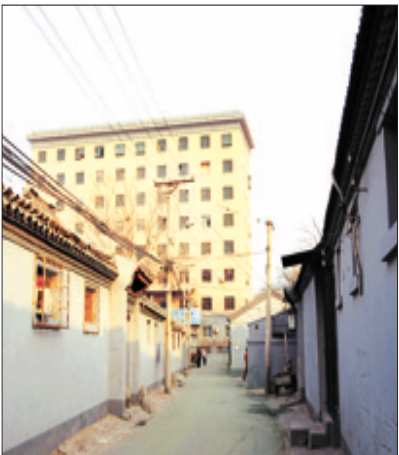
Parkour is an extreme sport that involves moving from one point to another as smoothly, efficiently and quickly as possible. Its enthusiasts in Beijing used the sport to introduce a new way of appreciating the city – to discover the history of buildings and the changes they have undergone, and to better get to know Beijingers.

They explored 18 areas downtown and put their experience in a book, *Beijing Parkour: Walking and Observing the 18 Regions*, which was published in April by Sanlian Bookstore Press.

The authors, together with Goethe-Institut China, organized three "Parkour tours" of the city to show other people their discoveries. Some participants were Beijingers who grew up in a hutong, while others were long-time residents who seldom deviated from their home-work route.



Xicheng District's Xisi Bei hutong have preserved their original layout and architecture.



Among Xisi Bei's courtyard houses is a surprising sight: the eight-story People's Commune Building.

### Xisi Bei hutong

Unlike hutong in Dongsi, Qianmen and Nanluogu Xiang, those in Xicheng District's Xisi Bei area have preserved their original layout and architecture – but they look rundown. The alleys were built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), when Xisi Bei was called Yangjiaoshi, or Ram's Horn Market, because it was frequented by livestock traders.

It became a bustling commercial district in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), with streets leading in all compass directions. Most of its surviving buildings included in the capital's hutong preservation plan date from this period.

Kong Shengqi, an architecture major at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, visited Xisi Bei during a Parkour tour on May 30. She grew up in Xicheng District and said, "I only have a rough idea of this area."

Xisi Bei has eight hutongs hidden amid tall buildings. Among them, Qiangongyong Hutong is the most picturesque because of its old architecture. The eastern yard of the Youth Palace, which can be found here, dates from the Yuan Dynasty, in which it was used to store daily necessities for the emperor. At the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the yard was expanded by a minister named Chong Zihou, who turned it into his private residence.

"The book writers told us stories about each hutong, so now I know more about the area in which I was born," Kong said after the tour.

### People's Commune Building

Among Xisi Bei's courtyard houses, northwest of the White Dagoba temple, is a surprising sight: a stately eight-story building. It is the People's Commune Building, which the municipality still has not decided whether to preserve or tear down.

It was constructed as a home for workers and their families during the Great Leap Forward, a government campaign between 1958 and 1960, which emphasized manpower rather than machines and capital expenditure to transform the economy from a primarily agrarian to a modern, industrialized one.

The building had no private kitchens; food was provided for everyone in the cafeteria. After Great Leap Forward ended, residents ended up cooking in the corridors.

Ning Xiaoxiao, a journalist with *World Vision* magazine, heard about the building through interviews before she took the tour on June 20. "Our generation is not familiar with this period of history," the 26-year-old said. "I hoped to make a visit before (the building) was torn down," she said.

Few people live in it nowadays, but the group was fortunate to come across an elderly man who has lived there for 30 years. Tenants pay less than a hundred yuan a month, and they have not been billed for water ever since the government told them three years ago that the building would be demolished.

Although the man is not satisfied with living conditions there, he said that he and his family would live in the building as long as it is in one piece. "Something is better than nothing," he told the group.

### Tianning Temple Pagoda

Located outside Guang'anmen, Xuanwu District, the pagoda is one of Beijing's earliest tall buildings, a memento from the Liao Dynasty (916-1125).

The octagonal pagoda, as high as a 17-story building, was erected on a square platform. The pagoda's bottom resembles a huge pedestal, and at its corners are relief of angels above which are carved arches. A veranda with banisters was built around it.

Three layers of huge lotus petal carvings on the pedestal support the pagoda's first story. On its four sides, facing the four directions, are more angel sculptures and arched gates. Above them are 13 levels of eaves, very close together, with no doors or windows.

Continued on page 21...



Xisi Bei has eight hutongs hidden amid tall buildings. (CFP Photos)



... continued from page 20



The Pagoda of Tianning Temple and chimney of the Beijing Second Heat Power Plant are called the "two towers" of Baizhifang area.



The Beijing East Railway Station, located in the central business district, has the feel of an old village.



Many clothing stores have set up shop in front of Longfu Temple, but shoppers are few.

The pagoda's pedestal, its first story, eaves and magnificent steeple form a magnificent structure that integrates the concepts of light and heavy, long and short, cramped and spacious.

The celebrated late architect Liang Sicheng praised the pagoda's design as having "musical rhythm" and being a "masterpiece of ancient architectural design."

Besides the pagoda, another popular attraction here is the chimney of the Beijing Second Heat Power Plant – the tallest chimney downtown built in 1976. The contrast between ancient relics and industrial remains gives the area a striking character.

Few of the Parkour participants had visited the place before they joined the tour. "I'm more familiar with the Tianningsi Bridge (a multi-layer bridge over the Second Ring Road) than the pagoda. The south of the ancient capital was full of history and a vitality that I can only imagine," Dong Xing, a designer and one of the participants, said.

### Qingnian Lake and remains of an imperial garden

South of the pagoda was the heart of the imperial garden in the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234).

In 1151, Wanyan Liang, the fourth Jin emperor, decided to transfer his capital to Beijing from Shangjing, now Acheng City in Heilongjiang Province. It was Beijing's advantageous geographical position that prompted this change.

The emperor mobilized 1.2 million laborers to build his new capital. When work was finished two years later, he moved to Yanjing and named it Zhongdu, in what is today the southwestern corner of Beijing, but less than one-third its present size.

The imperial palace was at the center of the city, bordered by ministerial offices, the emperor's polo grounds and Huitong Hall, where the emperor received foreign guests. The outer city was where the commoners lived.

None of the old structures remain but Qingnian Lake, which was called Yuzao Pond in the Jin Dynasty. A sign says the place was an imperial garden 800 years ago, but the lake is gone; it has no more water and plants have overtaken it. It is surrounded by half-finished buildings and several willow trees – the only hint of its past life.

"It (this part of history) has become a blind spot in people's minds, but I think it's worth remembering the great changes that time brings," Xu Tianlin, a staff at Goethe-Institut China, said.

### Beijing East Railway Station and Dongjiao Market

The East Railway Station and Dongjiao Market, located in the central business district, feels like an old village.

The station is a simple building constructed in the 1970s. It mainly serves freight trains. Seven passenger trains originally stopped there, but these have been whittled down to one that travels to Chengde, Hebei Province.

North of the station is Dongjiao Market, reminiscent of London's Portabello Market in terms of size and ambience. But its Ming-style decor makes it unmistakably Chinese.

Dongjia dominates both sides of the road. In the western section are an outdoor fruit and vegetable market and an indoor one for plants and water animals. Across the street visitors will find boutique-style stalls selling clothes and knick-knacks, vendors offering turtles, rabbits and squirrels, and household goods and hardware.

"Although the two places are located in the CBD, they have an atmosphere reminiscent of the 1950s we saw in movies," Wang Chang, a machinist and Parkout participant, said.

### Longfu Temple

The temple, located in Dongsu, was built during the reign of Ming Emperor Jingtai in 1452. It used to have the largest pair of temple gates in Beijing.

In 1901, Longfu caught fire and several of its halls burned to the ground.

From 1930, fairs were held at the temple every first, second, ninth and tenth of each month in the lunar calendar. Thus, it became known as host to the biggest and most influential temple fairs in the capital; stalls inside and outside the temple sold snacks, while folk arts became the feature presentation.

But in the 1990s, another blaze occurred here, which brought to an end the exciting sights and sounds of Longfu Temple.

"Before I came to Beijing, I heard of the fire in Longfu Temple," Chang Wei, another participant who teaches at the Beijing Institute of Clothing Technology, said. "But the area is familiar because there is a bookstore and an art museum there."

Many clothing stores have set up shop in front of Longfu, but shoppers are few. Their loudspeakers belting out pop music make a sharp contrast with their slow business.



The Beijing East Railway Station will soon be torn down.



None of the Jin Dynasty structures remain but Qingnian Lake, which was then called Yuzao Pond.



Qingnian Lake has no more water, and plants have overtaken it.

Photos provided by Goethe-Institut China





## Eating with Nemo



Dive headfirst into the freshest seafood in Beijing — a sumptuous array of king crabs, freshly shucked oysters, lobster, caviar, prawns and salmon. Savor the full flavor of your fresh catch with a range of homemade condiments, or have it steamed, fried or roasted to your taste at a live cooking station.

Where: Elements, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 6-10 pm, Fridays

Cost: 228 yuan per person including coffee and tea; 288 yuan including coffee, tea and unlimited local draft beer; add 120 yuan for unlimited wine; all prices subject to 15 percent surcharge

Tel: 5865 5020

## Tibetan Cuisine

Immerse yourself in the Tibetan cuisine like curried potatoes, roast lamb, grilled mushrooms and beef with pickled carrots.

Where: Makye Ame, 23 Baijiazhuang Dongli, Chaoyang District

When: 10 am – 11 pm  
Tel: 6508 8986

## Express Business Lunch Buffet



The new Express Business Lunch Buffet is pure pleasure for guests. Come indulge in authentic Macanese dishes, crafted by Chef de Cuisine Ricardo Bizarro, a native of Portugal. Start with a warming bowl of chickpea soup with smoked bacon, and then

move on to Portuguese sausage and spinach. A main course of duck leg served with saffron duck-flavoured risotto in Macanese style forms the perfect prelude to a sinfully delicious Macanese mango pudding for dessert.

Where: Vasco's, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Monday – Friday, 11:30 am – 2:30 pm

Cost: 158 yuan, subject to 15 percent service charge

Tel: 5812 8888 ext. 8411

## Experience the new Essence buffet

Enjoy the brand new international buffet at Crown Plaza Beijing. Start with some appetizing Sushi, scallops and Oysters, then move on to Norwegian salmon, tuna fillets, prawns and succulent steaks grilled fresh. There are both Chinese and Asian specialties and tantalizing chocolate desserts, like Swiss Moevenpick Ice Cream and 30 select sweet sensations.

Where: Essence Restaurant, Crowne Plaza Beijing, 48 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 6-10 pm

Cost: 180 yuan, subject to 15 percent surcharge (children five to 12 eat half off; five and under eat free)

Tel: 5911 9999 ext. 63

## Dining

## GMB Triple B Package

Don't miss the GMB Triple B Package, which includes Superior, Deluxe and Executive Club rooms

When: Until August 31

Where: Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 888 yuan, includes daily breakfast (Superior); 988 yuan, includes daily breakfast (Deluxe); 1,188 yuan, includes full club benefits (Executive Club); all prices subject to 15 percent surcharge

Tel: 8587 6888

## Luxury Room Club Sofitel



Indulge yourselves in the Luxury Room Club Sofitel, which offers complimentary breakfast at Club Lounge, complimentary broadband or Wi-Fi Internet access in the guest room, a 60-minute spa treatment at Sofitel LeSpa and 20 percent off laundry and dry cleaning.

Where: Sofitel Wanda Beijing, 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until August 31

Cost: 1,688 yuan per night

Tel: 8599 6666 ext. 6818

## Hotel Frequent Flyer Program

Gloria Hotels & Resorts has partnered with Air China PhoenixMiles on its Frequent Flyer Program. Members of Air China PhoenixMiles are entitled to 800 or 400 kilometers of mileage when they stay at any participating Gloria Hotel & Resort. Gloria Partners can earn an additional 800 kilometers by using 2,500 of their membership points.

On-line Reservation:  
gloriahotels.com

Toll Free Reservation: 800 810 8855

## Special Offers and Packages for the Summer Break

Do not miss this rare chance to catch a five-minute solar eclipse in Shanghai, the first in 300 years. Witness this unforgettable event at the Pudong Shangri-La with its exclusive partner Eclipse City.

When: July 21-23

Where: Pudong Shangri-La Shanghai, 33 Fucheng Lu, Pudong Xin Qu, Shanghai

Cost: from 4,275 yuan per night, including one night in a Deluxe Room; admission to the InterSoles Conference on July 21; guided excursion to Yangshan Island on July 22 to observe the eclipse with English and Chinese-speaking staff

Web site: eclipse-city.com

## Rent

### Courtyard House for rent

Fancy waking up to a view of the Great Wall or a lake from your window? This five-bedroom, 400 square meter courtyard house with modern amenities is available for rent. Comes with floor heating and air conditioning. The house is located 45 minutes out of the city. Perfect for people who love nature and want better air.

Tel: 15010943423



## Tourism

### City Walk

This is an ultimate city exploration walk. Tourists will visit a historically rich area of Beijing scheduled for demolition.

When: July 18, 1:30 pm

Where: Meet at Exit C of Hepingmen Station on Subway Line 2

Cost: Free

Tel: 15117916648

## Aviation

### Ticket Promotion for students abroad

To minimize travel costs,



Dragon Air (Beijing) is offering a ticket promotion for the students abroad. Flights from Beijing to London via Hong Kong start from 2,990 yuan, and to Auckland from 4,540 yuan. Flights departing from Chengdu to Paris via Hong Kong start from 3,810 yuan; and Xiamen to Sydney via Hong Kong from 4,110 yuan. Passengers may check 30 to 40 kilograms of luggage for free.

### Tea Blends

Customers travelling on Singapore Airlines Suites in First Class and Business Class will be able to choose from an exquisite range of unique international, Asian and

Chinese tea blends, proudly developed by Singapore's luxury brand TWG Tea. The selection of teas available on each route is designed to suit the passengers.

When: from July 1

### Special offer

British Airways announced a



special offer for customers flying from Beijing or Shanghai to Europe. Customers who book World Traveler economy return tickets on ba.com before October 3 will enjoy special fares starting from 4,000 yuan.

The offer is valid for departure from Beijing or Shanghai before October 3. Customers can travel to any of 13 European destinations including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Web: ba.com

(By Sun Feng)



### Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

### Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

# Be a gay dog and be happy



By Han Manman

Office worker Selina was thrilled when she recently found out that her new neighbor was a charming and good-looking British man. What put her on cloud nine was that the man appeared single; he lived only with a dog and no woman had visited him since he moved in the apartment a month ago.

"Maybe his move here is my big chance to find love," Selina thought. After observing her neighbor's routine for a few days, she discovered that the man always took his dog for a morning run at the park beside their apartment. She planned for an "encounter" the following morning.

That day, Selina got up early to get dressed and put on her new sporty outfit. Before she set eyes on her British neighbor, the last thing she had ever wanted was to get involved in a sport.

Like she planned, she saw the man and his dog running toward her as she jogged

around the park. His dark green T-shirt complemented his fair complexion and made him look even more handsome. On the shirt were the words "Be a gay dog." Selina's eyes widened in surprise.

"Does that mean his dog is gay or he is gay?" she thought. But Selina quickly settled the issue in her mind: "No matter how this ends, his dog is a good way to start a conversation with him."

"Hey, I love your dog, he looks very cute," Selina said when the man drew near her.

He stopped and smiled at her. "Thanks, I'm Tony." They shook hands after Selina introduced herself.

"Woohoo, good start," she thought, and then asked, "When did you know your dog was gay?"

Actually, Selina did not care about the dog's sexual preference, but asked the question to test Tony's reaction. She thought that might tell her whether or

not he was gay.

"What do you mean?" Tony look startled. "My dog is not a gay!" He thought the woman was pretty, but maybe something was wrong with her brain.

"Well, your T-shirt says ... So I thought ..." Selina felt her cheeks flame.

Tony burst out laughing. "You misunderstand. 'Be a gay dog' means be a happy man. Its similar to saying, 'Be a lucky dog.'"

Selina felt stupid and wanted the ground to swallow her up. "He must think I'm a dim-wit," she thought. "Our relationship is finished before it could even start."

She was trying to think of an excuse to make a quick exit when Tony spoke. "I know you're my neighbor and have wanted to invite you for a chat over coffee, but was too shy. Can I buy you a cup now?" he said with a smile.

"Haha, now I'm a gay dog!" Selina said to herself.

### 1. Children under 14 years old

**Professor Zhu Shida (PZS):** People nowadays frequently write such things in this way – which is incorrect. "14 years old" is an attributive, not a noun. The standard formal English way of saying it would be: the children are 14 years old, or the 14-year-old children. Please note the difference between the predicate and the attributive. How can you use an attributive after the preposition "under," which is an informal wording? You better avoid using it in standard formal English writing; nevertheless, the correct way is to say, children under the age of 14, or children under 14 years of age. However, the tendency of late is the increasingly use of "14 years old" as a noun. People even say "the 14-year-olds" to indicate 14-year-old children.

**Penny Turner (PT):** I would like to add to Professor Zhu's corrections the option "children under age 14." However, if the context of the sentence is clear – that it is discussing people's age – it is also acceptable to say, "children under 14" or "children under 14 years."

### 2. The NGO can profit if it is using for charity.

**PZS:** "They are using what for charity?" you may ask. The question arises as there is something missing in the sentence. What is missing is the object of the verb "use." When we are writing in English, an analytical language, we have to keep the whole picture in mind and put everything in its proper place. Anything missing or improperly placed will destroy the sentence. Obviously, the writer meant "money" as the object of "use." The complete sentence then would read, "The NGO can profit if it is using the money for charity."

**PT:** It's not clear to me what the writer is trying to say. By "profit" does the person mean "make money" or gain other, non-monetary benefits? Some NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are by nature not-for-profit groups, so if the writer meant "profit" in the second sense, then the object of "use" can be many things: money, its name/reputation, expertise, time, its other resources. So just fill in the blank and add any of these words after "using" and before "for." With regard to the first definition of profit, I don't think the NGO can make money at all by doing charity work, since charity work involves the free giving of time, energy, resources, etc.

### 3. It involves with many knowledge of small wine production areas.

**PZS:** There are two problems with this sentence. First, "to involve" is a transitive verb that means "to have as a necessary part, condition, or result; take in; include." It is never used intransitively, so it is wrong to add "with" after it. For instance, Housekeeping involves cooking, washing dishes, sweeping and cleaning. One foolish mistake may involve you in a good deal of trouble. The second problem in this sentence is the usage of "knowledge," a non-countable noun. Thus, it cannot be modified by "many." You have to say "much knowledge," just as you say "much water" or "much ink." So, the sentence should be rewritten as, It involves much knowledge of small wine production areas.

**PT:** I agree with the Professor Zhu's analysis and corrections. The original sentence's idea can also be expressed by substituting "much knowledge" with synonyms such as "expertise" and "mastery."

### Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

# Please the careful clothes mishandle flowers you the lipstick!

By Tiffany Tan

Is it possible to say this sentence without running out of breath? Or is it the brain protesting its absurdity? I cannot believe this sign was found in a Li Ning store – one of the country's leading sports brands and founded by the Olympic gymnastics champion who lit the Olympic flame during the Beijing Games' opening ceremony.

This is a dressing room sign directed at people who wear lipstick (even men wear make-up nowadays). It says, "Please be

careful you do not stain the clothes with your lipstick." As is usually the case with Chinglish signs, whoever made this sign wrote the English version by merely translating each Chinese character or word.

The sign was ruined beyond salvation by "mishandle flowers," translated from the characters *nong* and *hua*. They form the word *nonghua* or "stain," which is the key to demystifying this tongue twister. The next step is to reorder the words like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle until you get a picture that makes sense.





# Watchmen (2009)



## Movie of the week

Adapted from the comic of the same name, this movie is about super heroes. Or maybe super anti-heroes. While the cast may be unfamiliar to Chinese viewers, the movie is still interesting. Patrick Wilson made smart film choices and did not rely on or intentionally subvert his good looks. Malin Akerman is cute, but *28 Dresses* and *The Heartbreak Kid* do not a superhero make. Director Zack Snyder did some cool things with zombies in *Dawn Of The Dead* and in his wild adaptation of the comic *300*. His third film is also worth a look.

## Synopsis

The story is set in an alternate 1985 US in which costumed superheroes are part of the fabric of everyday society. In their timeline, the "Doomsday Clock" – which charts the US's tension with the Soviet Union – is permanently set at five minutes to midnight. When one of his former colleagues is murdered, the washed up but nonetheless determined masked vigilante Rorschach sets out to uncover a plot to kill and discredit all past and present superheroes. As he reconnects with his former crime-fighting legion – a ragtag group of retired superheroes, only one of whom has true powers – Rorschach glimpses a wide-ranging and disturbing conspiracy with links to their shared past and catastrophic consequences for the future.

## Scene 1

(Rorschach's investigation begins following the Comedian's murder.)

**Rorschach:** Rorschach's journal, October 12th, 1985. Dog carcass in alley this morning. Tire treads on burst stomach. This city's afraid of me. I've seen its true face. The streets are extended gutters and the gutters are full of blood. And when the drains finally scab over (1) ... all the vermin will drown.

The accumulated filth of all their sex and murder will foam up around their waists and all the whores and politicians will look up and shout, "Save us." And I'll whisper, "No."

Now the whole world stands on the brink ... staring down into the bloody hell. All those liberals and intellectuals and smooth talkers and all of a sudden (2), nobody can think of anything to say. Beneath me, this awful city. It screams like an abattoir full of retarded children and the night reeks (3) of fornication and bad consciences.

Tonight, a comedian died in New York. Somebody knows why. Somebody knows.

## Scene 2

(In another apartment in New York, Dan Dreiberg talks with the former Nite Owl Hollis Mason about the past of the Watchmen.)

**Hollis Mason (H):** It all started with the gangs. You know, people tend to forget that. Pirate outfits, ghosts. They thought it was funny: dress up and pull heists (4). As soon as we'd arrest them, they'd be back on the street. Nobody could pick them out of a lineup (5) because of the damn masks.

So a few of us cops, we get together and we figure (6), what the heck (7), we'll mask up, too. We'll finish what the law couldn't. Pretty soon, the papers get wind of it (8). They ran with it (9) and oh, boy, we're a national pastime.

It was me, Dollar Bill, Mothman, Captain Metropolis, Hooded Justice, Silk Spectre and the Comedian. Oh, don't get me started on him.

I must be drunk already, telling you this sob story again.

**Dan Dreiberg (D):** I think you were trying to make a point.

**H:** Well, my point is that we had it too easy. It wasn't fair what happened to you guys ... You guys who picked up where we left off. With Nixon forcing you out. Nixon, oh, that prick. I even voted for that prick five times ...

**D:** Oh, wow, it's almost midnight. Gotta go.

**H:** Truth? You were a better Nite Owl than I ever was, Danny boy.

## Scene 3

(In the end, the super heroes find that it is Ozymandias, one of the Watchmen, who was behind the whole plan. Major cities in the world were destroyed by his super weapon and he frames Dr. Manhattan as the criminal.)

**Dr. Manhattan (M):** What's that? Another ultimate weapon?

**Ozymandias (O):** Yes. You could say that.

(Ozymandias turns on the TVs in the hall.)

**Nixon:** Millions of lives were suddenly ended in an act of evil perpetrated by Dr. Manhattan himself. I have been in constant contact with the premier of the USSR. Putting aside (10) our past differences we have both pledged to unite against this common enemy.

With the rest of the world we will prevail. This is a day we shall never forget. And yet we go forward to defend the human race and all that is good and just in our world. Thank you. God bless us all.

**O:** Do you see? Two super-powers retreating from war. I've saved the earth from hell. We both have. This is as much your victory as it is mine.



## Vocabulary

1. **scab over:** to scab
2. **all of a sudden:** suddenly
3. **reek:** to have the stench or smell of something
4. **pull heists:** to rob someone
5. **pick someone out of a lineup:** to identify the criminal in a group of suspects
6. **figure:** here it means to discuss
7. **what the heck:** what the hell
8. **get wind of:** to learn of something or to hear about something
9. **run with:** here it means to cover the story
10. **put aside:** to decide not to deal with something

(By Wang Yu)

